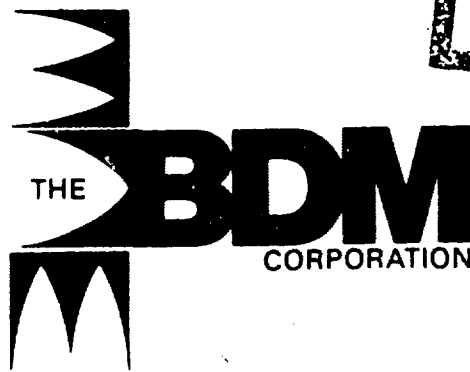


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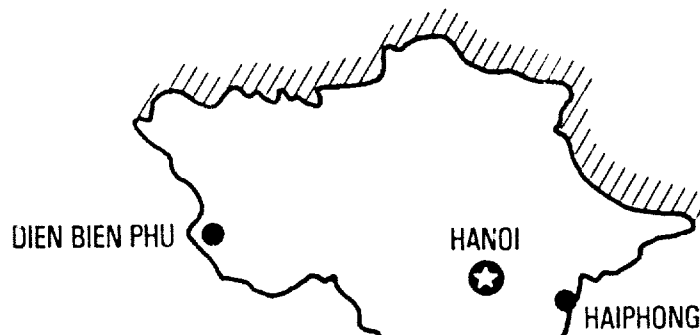
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*A Study of Strategic Lessons Learned  
in Vietnam*

# VOLUME VI CONDUCT OF THE WAR

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BOOK 2  
FUNCTIONAL ANALYSES  
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DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY  
US ARMY WAR COLLEGE  
STRATEGIC STUDIES INSTITUTE  
CARLISLE BARRACKS, PENNSYLVANIA 17013

REPLY TO  
ATTENTION OF

AWCI

9 March 1981

SUBJECT: Declassification of the BDM Study, "The Strategic Lessons Learned in Vietnam"

Defense Technical Information Center  
ATTN: Ms. Betty Weatherholtz  
Cameron Station  
Alexandria, VA 22314

1. Your organization was on the distribution list for the BDM study, "The Strategic Lessons Learned in Vietnam." The study was assigned AD numbers 3048632L through 641L.
2. In December 1980, the Army War College Security Office notified all recipients of the study by telephone that it contained classified information and should be secured.
3. BDM now has revised the appropriate pages of the study to delete all classified information and has conformed to all other requirements required by the clearance review.
4. A revised copy of the study which is unclassified and approved for public release is inclosed. DTIC Form 50's are inclosed for assignment of new AD numbers.

Incls  
as

  
ANDREW C. REMSON, JR.  
Colonel, CE  
Director, Strategic Studies Institute



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*Original kept.*

*11/2 May 80*

May 2, 1980

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*6*  
A STUDY OF STRATEGIC LESSONS  
LEARNED IN VIETNAM.  
VOLUME VI.  
CONDUCT OF THE WAR.  
BOOK 2.  
FUNCTIONAL ANALYSES.

This draft is submitted to DANG-SSP.

4341/78W

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# THE BDM CORPORATION

## FOREWORD

This study is a final draft submitted to DAMO-SSP in accordance with the provisions of Contract No. DAAG 39-78-C-0120.

The tasks are to identify and analyze lessons that should be learned from three decades of US involvement in Vietnam. This is Volume VI of the Study.

Volume I	The Enemy
Volume II	South Vietnam
Volume III	US Foreign Policy and Vietnam 1945-1975
Volume IV	US Domestic Factors Influencing Vietnam War Policy Making
Volume V	Planning the War
Volume VI	Conduct of the War
Book 1	Operational Analyses
Book 2	Functional Analyses
Volume VII	The Soldier
Volume VIII	The Results of the War

*Little on file*

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The views of the authors do not purport to reflect the positions of the Department of the Army or the Department of Defense.



PREFACE

A. PERSPECTIVE OF THE STUDY

This volume, Conduct of the War, is the sixth of an eight-volume study entitled A Study of Strategic Lessons Learned in Vietnam, undertaken by the BDM Corporation under contract to the US Army. This comprehensive research effort is aimed at identifying lessons which US military leaders and US civilian policy makers should have learned or should now be learning from the US experience in Vietnam. Because of its size, this volume is divided into two books: Book 1 deals with ground combat operations in each phase of US involvement in Indochina and also treats the air and naval wars plus unconventional operations; Book 2 deals separately with the functional aspects of that war.

Since World War I, the "American Way of War" has become increasingly based and dependent on science, technology, and overwhelming materiel resources which translate into superior mobility and massive firepower. Our military presence is pervasive and its costs are high in money and things, but it repays these expenditures through the saving of US lives and limbs. This is a natural and logical approach for an extremely wealthy country which places a high value on the individual citizen. Although much of what we do best proved to be inappropriate or even counterproductive in the nature of the environment and conflict in Vietnam, our normal response was typical of most large bureaucracies: do more of the same, better.

These generalizations obviously conceal many exceptions, but they do help explain why we were so often out of our element in the unique - for us - conflict in Indochina. Our politicians, diplomats, and soldiers feel much more comfortable in a European environment, where science, technology, "gadgets" and our sort of rationale weigh heavier on the scales than they did in Southeast Asia.

Our data and analyses show that we did many things in Vietnam quite well; unfortunately, in the long run, many of our proudest achievements come back to haunt us. Conversely, a significant number of these "success

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stories" might well be invaluable, in either the deterrent or war-fighting roles, in a different arena for even higher stakes.

For the most part, this book examines those functional areas which lie on the material or scientific wing of the military spectrum. Even in relatively "soft" arenas such as intelligence, command and control, and psychological warfare, we too often reverted to form and attempted to solve the problems through organization, hardware and quantifiable data. This approach becomes self-defeating when it limits and dominates the intellectual process to exclude the exercise of common sense.

### B. PURPOSE OF VOLUME VI, "CONDUCT OF THE WAR," -- BOOK 2

→ The purpose of this book is to provide separate analyses of several of the functional aspects related to conduct of the war in Vietnam. Land, air, sea and river, and clandestine operations are analyzed in Book 1. This book responds to the Request for Proposal (RFP) dealing with the following subtasks:

- Intelligence:- determination of the extent to which initial US intelligence estimates were correct; description of the resources available to US policymakers and the record of reliability; and a description and analysis of the intelligence and counterintelligence efforts throughout the war, to include an evaluation of the Phoenix program.
- Logistics:- determination of the adequacy of logistics policies, organization, and contingency planning; the impact of the sophisticated US logistics system and comfortable lifestyle on US troops and RVNAF; evaluation of the security of logistics installations and operations; and US financial management.
- Command and Control:- description and assessment of the relative effectiveness of the command and control structure.
- The Advisory Effort:- description of the roles of US advisors and the major strengths and shortcomings of US programs, policies, and advice; determination of the adequacy of training;

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determination of the positive and negative effects that US advisors and programs had on nation building and war fighting; and description of the major implications for the USG and the US Army.

- Psychological Operations; - description and assessment of formal US and allied PSYOP efforts, particularly as they related to success or failure achieved by the enemy in country and internationally.
- Civil Affairs; - description and assessment of the civil affairs concept, structure and policies of the US Armed Forces in RVN.
- Measures of Progress - Keeping Score; - assessment of the statistical factors used by US authorities to measure progress in Indochina.
- Technology; - determination of the extent to which technology helped or hindered the US and allied war effort.
- Allies; - description and assessment of the impact of allied participation in the war effort.

### C. THEMES THAT EMERGE IN VOLUME VI, BOOK 2

Since each of the chapters of this book deals with a distinct subject, no one theme stands out except that the US effort in RVN was greatly fragmented:

- Lack of an all-source intelligence capability in country caused the intelligence effort to be substantially less effective than it otherwise could have been; the services failed to share much of their intelligence data with other US components until nearly the end of the war.
- After its initial gross inadequacies, resulting mainly from the failure to mobilize reserve components, the US logistical system was enormously effective in meeting the exorbitant requirements levied on it; the system was not efficient, however, and proved

## THE BDM CORPORATION

to be exceptionally wasteful and undisciplined while at the same time failing to meet the needs of RVNAF after the US withdrawal.

- Lack of appropriate command and control mechanisms seriously eroded the efficiency of combat operations and contributed to the anomaly of several separate and apparently unrelated wars.
- US advisors appear to have been effective when advising in purely technical military matters such as weapons instruction, but they were neither trained nor indoctrinated properly for advising the RVNAF in the politico-military environment which characterized Vietnam.
- The stereotyped US psychological operations in RVN appear to have achieved no particular successes, whereas the enemy, whether by luck or intent, racked up several impressive psychological victories.
- Early civil affairs activities were generally ineffective; CORDS was very successful after 1967, and had the US not reneged on the president's promise to intervene if the DRV violated the cease-fire, CORDS offered considerable promise of success.
- Statistics provide a reasonable basis for making strategic and tactical decisions when those statistics are used intelligently; in Indochina the body count, tonnages of bombs dropped, numbers of artillery rounds fired, numbers of sorties launched, unit days in the field, numbers of patrols dispatched, etc., were important statistics for promotion and decorations but in no way did they measure progress toward achieving US goals.
- The evolutionary process for development of several weapon systems was speeded up because of the war in Vietnam, and important developments took place in airmobile tactics, techniques, and equipment as well as in electronics and ordnance; several technological developments made it possible to launch devastating attacks against the enemy's heartland in the face of an extremely sophisticated air defense system while suffering a relatively low

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level of casualties, and in this sense technology helped in the prosecution of the war and has provided, at least temporarily, an advantage for the US over the USSR with respect to air-delivered ordnance.

- Except for the Australian and New Zealand forces, the allies in RVN were solicited and paid for by the US in what proved to be an unsuccessful effort to create an image of multilateral concern for the GVN; the ROK forces were feared by the South Vietnamese civilians, and their major contribution was the occupation of a substantial amount of territory; the Thai forces were not combat effective and might better have been used at home.

### D. HISTORICAL-CHRONOLOGICAL OVERVIEW OF BOOK 2

Figure VI-1 reflects selected events that relate to the conduct of the war in Indochina. Each of the chapters of this book deals with a distinct topic and each is treated chronologically. Inevitably there will be some redundancy within and between the chapters because of the desire to have each chapter stand by itself. Book 1 recounts and analyzes the combat operations in Indochina and provides the background for the functional efforts described herein.

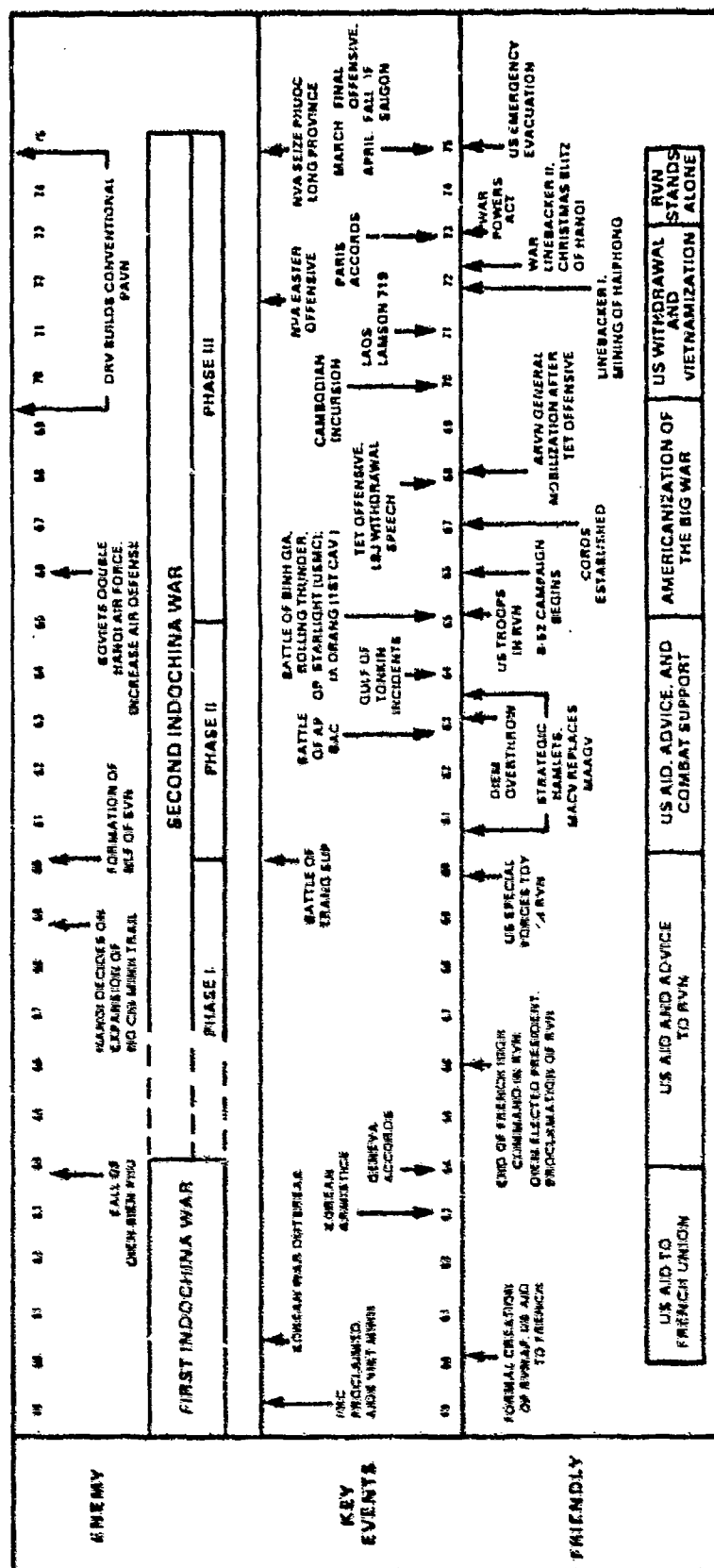


Figure VI-1. Selected Events Affecting the Conduct of the War

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This is Book 2 of Volume VI, Conduct of the War. Book 1 describes the conduct of the ground war in each of its important phases and concludes with an assessment of air and naval operations and unconventional warfare. Book 2 is concerned with the functional or specialist aspects of that war. In addition to describing and analyzing intelligence and logistic performance, this book addresses the serious command and control problems that impacted on the conduct of the war; those problems have yet to be resolved satisfactorily. Other sub-topics include functional areas such as the role of advisors, psychological operations, civil affairs, measures of progress, technology, and allied participation and support.

Much of the data presented herein was peculiar to Vietnam and must be viewed in that light. From these Vietnam-oriented insights, however, a few important lessons can be identified, particularly in the fields of intelligence, logistics and military assistance and advisory activities.

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### INSIGHTS

- Intelligence
- The initial absence and subsequent inadequacy of US intelligence assets in Southeast Asia during the critical advisory period (1950-1965) and overdependence on the host nation for information made it virtually impossible for US decision makers to get a realistic appraisal of the insurgency potential and political and social ferment in South Vietnam or the preoccupation of the DRV with "land reform" (population control) in the North. Lacking such essential information, the advice and support given by the USG to the GVN was based on faulty analysis and was therefore inadequate to meet the real political and insurgent threats, resulting in the near collapse of the GVN and RVNAF in 1965. This intelligence failure contributed significantly to the USG's commitment of ground combat forces in RVN.
  - Among senior officers and within the intelligence community, there appears to have been a lamentable lack of familiarity with the enemy's doctrine, organization, strategy, and tactics coupled with a related failure by most to read and understand the writings of Mao, Ho, Giap, and others, or to try to learn from the French experience against the same enemy. Those who did understand the enemy apparently were unable to articulate their concern or knowledge at high levels within DOD and the administration. Had a better understanding of the enemy's modus operandi existed, the VCI would have been an early priority intelligence target. Since the infrastructure was not targeted early enough, it was able to become entrenched and to foment insurgency with marked efficiency.
  - Concentration in the Reserve Component of substantial numbers of personnel with various intelligence MOSs left the active military forces with insufficient deployable intelligence specialists in 1965, and that critical shortcoming resulted in an intelligence product that was considerably lower in quality than it might otherwise have been. (Failure to mobilize hurt the Army and Marine Corps across the board, not simply in the intelligence field.)
  - The one-year US tour of duty in RVN inhibited the intelligence function and deprived analysts from gaining and using the expertise that comes with time on the job.
  - Excessive reliance on SIGINT by the US and ARVN made them susceptible to communications deception; ARVN's poor OPSEC/COMSEC often alerted the enemy and resulted in heavy casualties and tactical failure -- such as in LAM SON 719 (1971). US COMSEC was also generally very poor.



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- The communist enemy in Southeast Asia appreciated intelligence as a major component of success or failure and therefore employed every intelligence mechanism available to him, including people's intelligence, while simultaneously practicing generally excellent COMSEC.
- Perhaps the best example of coordinated, top-level, all-source operational intelligence was Operation KINGPIN at Son Tay. All of the data needed to execute that raid with a high (95%) chance for tactical success without casualties was obtained because of the level of interest (President Nixon, Dr. Kissinger, Secretary of Defense Laird, and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Admiral Moorer), thus assuring priority acquisition and full cooperation by all federal agencies. Execution was virtually flawless. Failure to free any US POWs was not an intelligence failure (it was recognized at the time of launch that there was a strong likelihood that the POWs had been transferred); rather it is an illustration of the difficulty in obtaining and acting on time-sensitive, perishable information.
- NSA's insistence on conducting SIGINT analysis in CONUS often delayed the availability of important data beyond the point where it would have been useful. Further, analysts in CONUS could not be expected to know and appreciate the tactical commanders' requirements nor could they have access to local collateral information that would help in the analytical process.
- The US and GVN failed to provide for or use effectively skilled stay-behind agents in and after 1954. This type of operation requires early planning, training, and indoctrination plus careful preparation. Conversely, the DRV anticipated, planned for, and implemented an effective stay-behind program which, in the early 1960s, nearly toppled the GVN and which provided valuable HUMINT and other services throughout the war.
- US and GVN intelligence apparatus focused too much on main force units and not enough on the VCI and local guerrillas until very late in the game. Further, the focus on enemy "capabilities", not balanced by analysis of his "intentions", helped to lead to such major surprises as Tet '68, Lamson 719 (1971), the Easter offensive (1972), and the Final Offensive (1975).
- With some exceptions, order of battle intelligence on PLAF and PAVN main force units was good to excellent throughout US involvement in the war; as a result the enemy was generally unable to mass and seriously threaten large US units.

- Despite the many positive aspects of US intelligence operations in Indochina (SIGINT, PHOTINT, HUMINT acquisition and analysis), there is need for a more cohesive effort between intelligence personnel, commanders, and policy makers, and between the Service components and intelligence establishments.

#### LESSONS

To support an in-theater intelligence effort, an all-source intelligence center, including SIGINT, should be established under the theater commander (unified, sub-unified or combined) in country or nearby to fuse the collected information. Analysts at this center would require access to the same highly sensitive information which the senior intelligence analysts in Washington would have.

Unit commanders and their staffs at brigade and possibly battalion level should be cleared for SIGINT and should receive direct SIGINT support during combat operations to optimize tactical operations and fully exploit all-source intelligence.

If the intelligence effort is to succeed in the first critical period of a crisis, there must exist a sufficient body of trained intelligence personnel in all specialties of the intelligence field, and personnel activities must have the capability of identifying and assigning to appropriate headquarters, field organizations, and combat units the requisite intelligence specialists.

The US still lacks a sophisticated and sound information gathering and analytical process to divine and order probable enemy "intentions" to supplement the evaluation of his capabilities.

Superior military force does not ensure victory without adequate intelligence. By the same token, an enemy who is not a technological match for his opponent must marshal a thorough intelligence and counterintelligence effort to offset his opponent's advantages in manpower, firepower, and equipment.

Historically, intelligence training and use in peacetime for officers in the US Services have been less

than adequate; selection and training of intelligence specialists have failed to meet early requirements in major crises. These problems should be resolved at the top command levels by recognition of the need for a truly professional military intelligence corps in peacetime to assure its availability in time of war.

The predilection among many commanders and their staffs for trying to achieve consensus in the analysis and reporting of intelligence information must be avoided at all cost; divergent opinions and conflicting analyses should be tolerated, listened to, and even encouraged.

Insurgents operating in territory familiar to them will succumb to regular forces only if the regulars know and understand their insurgent enemy and then fully exploit their own mobility, firepower, communications, and other modern advantages without counterproductive fallout among any indigenous populace. That requires good intelligence.

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### INSIGHTS

#### Logistics

The Army Material Command (AMC), a then newly organized agency, had primary logistic responsibilities for supporting the buildup in Vietnam and fostered a number of innovative solutions to major obstacles:

- An automatic supply system which enabled the initial buildup of forces to be supported.
- The establishment and operation of the floating aircraft maintenance facility in Vietnam--the USN Corpus Christi Bay. That aviation maintenance facility reduced the pipeline of requirements for high-cost aircraft components. In FY 68 it overhauled components valued at \$44 million at a cost \$6.8 million.
- The establishment of the roll-on and roll-off service between Okinawa, Vietnam, and Thailand, and of the Sea Land container service to Okinawa and Southeast Asia.
- The use of De Long piers in RVN in lieu of permanent pier construction.
- The development of Project Power Float, which utilized T-2 Tankers as floating power barges for supporting Vietnam bases.

The following factors generated unexpected logistical problems:

- US combat forces were committed without the lead time needed for normal or special logistic preparations.
- US military power was applied incrementally with continual changes in logistic requirements, providing little opportunity for coherent long-range planning.
- Reserve forces and civilian industry were not mobilized despite the magnitude of the conflict, making it necessary to rely heavily and excessively on civilian contractors.
- Logistic operations of the military departments were subjected to a degree of control at the Department of Defense level that required the referral of many routine logistics decisions to high levels for resolution.
- Pre-hostilities logistic contingency planning within PACOM and its component commands failed to provide for the proper balance between operational concepts and logistic capabilities.
- Base development planning failed to receive the priority of emphasis required prior to the build-up phase.
- The base development program executed in Vietnam was unnecessarily costly due to the philosophy of importing into the combat environment a US peacetime living standard for the committed forces. The unnecessary costs of the base development program resulted mainly from the affluent policies of DOD, the Services, and

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the in-country commands. Congressional authorization and appropriation acts thus gave the stamp of congressional approval to wasteful practices.

- Rapid escalation of the construction program resulted in loss of effective management control of contractor efforts, both by prime contractors and government contracting agencies, resulting in the procurement of unneeded supplies, equipment, and services. Government costs increased substantially and great quantities of supplies and materiel were lost due to inadequate storage facilities, physical security, and inventory controls.
- The rapid buildup of US forces in RVN with their accompanying supplies and equipment, augmented with the automatic resupply (PUSH) packages initially, followed by supplies and equipment which they requisitioned (PULL), created a virtual log jam of supplies and shipping in Vietnam. Insufficient port capacity and critical shortages of logistic troops and facilities in RVN adversely affected our capability to receive, store, and distribute supplies.
- Lack of supply discipline and of confidence in the supply system added to the problem of large excesses of equipment and materials, generated by:
  - Requisitioning items without adhering to follow-up procedures.
  - Inflating demands and generating multiple issues of items.
  - Assigning high priority designations to all requisitions.
  - Failing to code requisitions as recurring or non-recurring
  - Hoarding supplies at unit levels either intentionally or because of ignorance of disposition procedures. Even today, Army manuals and doctrine emphasize forward movement of supply, but little on the retrograde of excesses.
  - Abusing the "blank check" policies in the early stages.
- The Vietnam War was fought under peacetime statutory and regulatory limitations that were inapplicable to the situation.
- The limitation on use of O&M funds for minor construction was not compatible with requirements of the combat zone or construction-cost escalation.
- Strict application of the Armed Services Procurement Regulations (ASPR) on use of personal service contracts is impracticable in a combat environment. Modification of the ASPR is required to permit personal service contracts in wartime.

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- The statutory requirement to notify the House Armed Services Committee before restoring or replacing facilities damaged or destroyed by hostile action in a war zone is impracticable, and authority for reconstruction should be delegated to the appropriate in-country command level.
- Depot overhaul could not be accomplished in Vietnam due to the lack of skills, facilities, and the combat environment, requiring an intensively managed program to control the flow of serviceable equipment to Vietnam and the retrograde of unserviceable assets to out-of-country facilities for rebuild.
- The rapid buildup in RVN without mobilizing the Reserve Component made it necessary to draw on materiel and equipment in or scheduled for the Reserves to outfit Regular units deploying to RVN. The inadequacy of War Reserve Material and Supplies (WRMS) was underscored by the Vietnam War.
- Many government-owned production facilities were obsolete and lacked funds for adequate maintenance and rehabilitation. The DOD disposal effort resulted in too few plants to support contingencies, and the grossly inadequate industrial mobilization planning resulted in reduced responsiveness of the industrial capability.
- The retrograde of forces and materiel from the combat zone (1969-1972) was done while under fire with continuing high priority support of the in-country forces. It constitutes a unique and remarkably effective effort.

### LESSONS

In future conflicts, US construction efforts should be a responsibility of the theater command to facilitate planning, contracting and construction execution. The Army should have the primary responsibility for construction, although the need for augmentation by construction units from other Services must be anticipated and planned for.

- Severe constraints must be imposed upon the construction effort, and only operationally needed facilities should be constructed.
- Procedures must be developed to provide effective management controls over construction contract efforts, particularly those of the magnitude of the RVN joint venture contract.
- Overseas major supply bases are required for the storage of pre-positioned, long-lead-time construction material and supplies to increase responsiveness. Major overseas depots should also serve as major supply points for consummable construction material which will be shipped forward on "as required" basis.

A closed-loop, centrally controlled, overhaul maintenance system utilizing both theater and CONUS facilities is essential for peacetime and wartime maintenance. Additionally, provisions for using such a closed-loop program must be included in mobilization and contingency plans. It should be noted that the effectiveness of a closed-loop system depends on the availability of serviceable assets and the timely retrograde of unserviceables to the maintenance centers.

The current Army active duty structure fails to provide for adequate flexibility in meeting facility-engineering force requirements for contingency operations in less than a total mobilization.

Failure to practice supply discipline and fiscal restraint in the early phases of a buildup, in the field and at unified command and Service Headquarters Level, will contribute materially to serious logistical and fiscal problems and inexcusable waste.

INSIGHTS

Command,  
Control, and  
Cooperation

There is a great deal to learn from analyses of the arrangements employed to plan and control the US and allied war effort in Indochina, but there is little to emulate.

The four main elements of the US strategy for the conflict (i.e., preparing GVN & RVNAF to stand on their own, defeating the enemy's strategy on the ground within RVN, the punitive air war over the DRV, and the quest for meaningful negotiations), for the most part, were separately conceived and controlled and at times largely unrelated.

The United States adopted a system of command and control which it recognized as inherently flawed. The reasons for selecting such a system were many and varied, they included: the sensitivity and vulnerability of the GVN and RVNAF to the charge of being US puppets; the USG's concept of limited war for limited aims; the desire of the White House to keep tight control over the air war in the North; the reluctance of the JCS to infringe on the prerogatives of the theater and field commanders and interagency and interservice rivalries. Although each exception to the principle of unity of command could be rationalized, the end result was considerable wasted resources and unnecessary delays and frictions. Whether the political/psychological damage of unified command would have been a greater negative is hard, if not impossible, to determine.

The enemy (Lao Dong leadership) treated Indochina as one integral theater of war, while the US - to our detriment - artificially divided it (politically, geographically, and militarily) into a number of nearly autonomous fiefdoms.

While benefiting enormously from our confusing, inefficient and costly command and control arrangements, the enemy was never strong enough, militarily - as long as the US was fully engaged in combat - to expose or exploit dramatically the inherent weaknesses between and within the allied forces. But after US forces departed he was able to take decisive advantage of the inherited "contradictions" built into GVN and RVNAF.

- Absorbing the US MAAG into and dispersing its functions throughout MACV was one of several factors that impeded and delayed "Vietnamization" for several critical years during the "Big War."
- The multiple and expensive US projects which were designed to support the RVN Pacification Programs (under often changing titles) were diffused among various US civil and military agencies and thus were competitive, overlapping and generally inefficient until the new and powerful CORDS organization was



placed under MACV control in mid-1967. The lateness of this change, however, resulted in too much being attempted, too fast by too many, thus overwhelming GVN and RVNAF.

- Over time both GVN and RVNAF were molded increasingly along US lines; when the American advisors were withdrawn abruptly, neither had the depth of leadership, experience, or means to carry on effectively with US ways, and it was too late to develop their own.
- Neither the US nor the GVN ever satisfactorily resolved the command and control problems inherent in the concurrent and conflicting demands of territorial/population security and those of big unit mobile warfare.
- The RVNAF command and control procedures and practices, while generally suitable for small scale relatively static combat, for the most part were hopelessly inadequate for large scale mobile war.
- Presidents Diem and Thieu, as well as the itinerant GVN leaders between them, often and deliberately violated the chain of command and issued orders directly to subordinate commanders; naturally the RVNAF corps commanders ignored the Joint General Staff (JGS) when they so desired. The JGS had too little authority, power, or prestige to function effectively.
- Basically, for political and psychological reasons, the cardinal principle of unity of command (effort) was flagrantly violated in Southeast Asia and even within South Vietnam; the substitute formula of "cooperation and coordination" between national units was unduly costly in time, tempers, efficiency, monies and blood. That it worked at all is a tribute to the dedication, hard work and common sense of a large number of soldiers at all levels of command.
- The Annual Combined Campaign Plan (CCP) was designed to coordinate and to arrange the efforts of all the allied forces in RVN; the evidence examined indicated that it fell short of expectations and that the war was primarily a highly decentralized one with widely varied approaches and results.
- In the early days of the US involvement in RVN, the US country team in Saigon existed in name more than it did in fact. Each agency marched to the beat of its parent drummer in Washington; small wonder that most people and programs were usually out of step with each other.
- Dividing the conduct of the war between PACOM and MACV was unsound, wasteful and often counterproductive. The situation would have been much worse if the senior commander and their staffs had not worked hard to "cooperate and coordinate."

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- Hawaii was too far from both Indochina and Washington to play a significantly constructive role in the daily - sometimes hourly - intercourse between JCS and MACV; on balance, CINCPAC was a superfluous link in the chain of command.
- MACV was never a truly joint headquarters, but was heavily Army; control and intelligence was improved significantly in 1972 when 7th AF Headquarters "moved in" with MACV.
- The fragmented command and control of the massive allied air power available in Southeast Asia precluded proper exploitation of its inherent flexibility, range, speed and firepower and thus was counterproductive; the "single manager" concept for US air power in RVN, agreed to in 1968, proved to be more form than fact except for a relatively short period.
- The closely held planning and tight control of the Linebacker II operations by JCS and Headquarters Strategic Air Command resulted in tremendous coordination and control problems with PACOM, MACV and 7th US Air Force; it may have also resulted in unnecessary losses in aircraft and crews.
- The centralized control of airpower in a theater of operations, outside of NATO, apparently is still a sensitive and unresolved issue.
- The communications equipment and people eventually provided to control and support the war in Southeast Asia were plentiful, expensive, and generally quite efficient. Starting with rags, the communicators ended with unnecessary riches.
- The wealth and ready availability of electronic communications resulted in a veritable flood of messages to, from and within RVN, many of which were of a trivial nature, aided and abetted by the US (and RVNAF) tendency towards poor communications security.
- Short of the President, no single official or agency had the responsibility and authority to coordinate and supervise, on a daily basis, the heterogeneous USG bureaucracy involved in the complex political-military conflict in Southeast Asia.
- In principle, civilian control of the military was never a significant issue; the major irritant was and still is: just who within the bureaucracy should exercise, in degree and kind, control over which military functions?
- The JCS played a necessary and difficult, but far from decisive, role in the war. With some justice they were charged with being mere "conduits" and "rubber stamps" for CINCPAC and COMUSMACV.

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- While loyally supporting the field commanders, the JCS failed to provide adequate and timely guidance and meaningful supervision. Conversely, they apparently failed to translate and present convincingly military imperatives to their civilian chiefs. (Those remain as unresolved dilemmas.)
- The establishment or acceptance of inherently weak command and control arrangements by USG, JCS, and MACV in some respects reflected the general US approach to the war: do only the minimum necessary if and when required, to avoid defeat.

### LESSONS

Unity of command (effort) remains as one of the cardinal principles of war across the entire spectrum of conflict.

In countering a Revolutionary (people's) War unity of effort is absolutely essential; that unity must include not only the indigenous inter/intragovernmental agencies but also those of any allies involved. Selection of the person, office, and nation to be placed in overall charge of the combat efforts will require insightful, sensitive analysis and objective, courageous decisions.

Coalition warfare - a basic tenet of US strategic policy - inherently is extremely difficult to coordinate and control; expedient compromises may suffice during periods of low to mid-intensity conflict, but inevitably will result in grievous fractures under heavy political-military pressure.

Despite the hard-earned "lessons" of World War II, Korea and Vietnam, the USG, and especially the military, have not resolved satisfactorily joint warfare doctrine, especially with regard to control of air power.

The JCS and Services must search for and agree to realistic doctrine and techniques for providing necessary military guidance, supervision and support to the field commanders; otherwise, in a future crisis, the military is likely to lose yet more influence and control.

INSIGHTS

The Advisory  
Effort

- The initial US advisory effort in RVN (1956-1965) succeeded in developing a regular Army (ARVN) of limited competence in conventional warfare, an Army that required US combat support to operate with any appreciable efficiency against PLAF (VC) main force units; the ARVN was neither trained nor motivated to target and operate against the communist infrastructure (VCI) which constituted the principal actual threat through 1964.
- For whatever reason, lack of funding or lack of sufficient trainable manpower, the police forces in RVN were not trained or equipped by USOM to operate effectively against the guerrilla forces in South Vietnam; coupled with a similar failing in the military this deficiency on the part of the USG/GVN contributed significantly to the communists' ability to entrench themselves and expand their influence and control throughout the republic.
- In general, US advisors to RVN were not selected on the basis of language skills or ability to deal effectively with Asian counterparts, but rather on the basis of military occupational specialty and availability for and vulnerability to an overseas hardship tour.
- Military personnel were posted in large numbers to advisory billets in which civilians would have been more appropriate; this situation stemmed from a lack of sufficient numbers of civilians with the proper skills who were willing to serve in a combat zone, balanced by the ready availability of military personnel and the procedures for identifying and tasking them.
- In the period of major US involvement (1965-1970), US advisors assigned to RVNAF units provided a useful liaison function although the quality of their advice varied; advisors in the CORDS, beginning in 1967, contributed significantly to the early development of pacification and, subsequently, Vietnamization.
- Among the disadvantages that accrued to the US advisors were the general lack of language training and thorough indoctrination before reporting; the lack of careful selection to weed out those who may have been ill-suited for advisory duties on either a professional or personal basis; the short one-year tours which, when orientation and R and R time were subtracted, provided less than a year to acquire the wide variety of combat-associated experiences needed, to know and understand their counterparts, and to gain the cooperation needed to do the job.

- Advisors often faced a difficult problem in trying to report honestly and accurately: RVNAF counterparts could be embarrassed and lose face in many instances; in other cases, senior US officials insisted on favorable reports and discouraged accurate reporting.

#### LESSONS

The US military services have demonstrated their professional excellence in training foreign personnel and units in technical skills; they have not performed well in advising in politico-military matters because of their lack of background, training, education, and competence.

Future advisory efforts should rely on a cadre of highly trained specialists rather than a massive effort by amateurs; those specialists should be familiar with the history, culture, and government of the country in which they serve and they should be fluent in the indigenous language and well trained in advisory techniques. Further, the tour of duty for advisors should be of sufficient duration to be effective and to assure continuity.

INSIGHTS

Psycho-  
logical  
Operations

- Much was learned as a result of the massive US PSYOP effort in RVN, but the lessons may be difficult to apply in a democratic society: Americans generally believe in separating military matters from politics, and they endorse an open society with close public scrutiny of all government actions. These mind sets create a difficult climate for PSYOP in contrast with the subtle and patient communist enemy in Indochina.
- A government faced with a growing insurgency has already lost touch with its people; it has failed to communicate with them or to develop programs to satisfy their needs. If it is to survive, that government must respond to the legitimate needs of its people and make the necessary political, social, and economic changes while attenuating the hard-core opposition either psychologically or militarily.
- PSYOP conducted by the US/GVN were more mechanical than psychological, being driven and measured by statistics, such as numbers of leaflets deployed and numbers of broadcasts made.
- The GVN faced nearly insuperable odds in trying to conduct PSYOP effectively, having had the issues of nationalism and anticolonialism co-opted by the Viet Minh and then the DRV at the outset; from about 1960 to 1963 the steady erosion of the GVN's image made it difficult to employ PSYOP (while losing), and the series of chaotic changes in government after Diem's murder made it impossible to conduct a coordinated or coherent effort. BG S.L.A. Marshall commented on that period in these terms, "I judged that our psychological operations were, as usual, only a few degrees above zero."
- US PSYOP efforts internationally were not successful, having failed to explain the US position in a sympathetic light or to unmask the enemy, thereby failing to elicit the support of many allies and failing to blunt the criticism emanating from communist countries and the third world.
- US/GVN PSYOP failed to exploit the more prominent communist excesses such as occurred at Hue in 1968 or the slaughter of refugees in the 1972 Easter offensive, yet suffered PSYOP reverses at the hands of the US and international media over the 1968 Tet Offensive and My Lai.

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- The organization of JUSPAO was a major step in Vietnam in developing functional integrity for PSYOP, but it was fractured by indifference, bureaucratic rivalry and differing conceptions of propaganda and policy; the military establishment never took PSYOP very seriously, and its officers in the field believed that anyone, themselves included, could write leaflets.
- The American PSYOP effort, to be effective, had to be a derivative, not a primary effort; it could advise, exhort, teach, fund and equip the South Vietnamese who were conducting PSYOP, but it could not substitute for them.

### LESSONS

The indigenous government must develop policies and programs which reduce the grievances and meet the aspirations of its people. The psyoperators who participate in the policy-making process must also participate in the communicating process.

The psychological operations messages must be consistent and adhere to reality; the government policies and programs described must actually exist and must be vigorously pursued by the government.

An assisting power cannot substitute for the host government in communicating with its people.

To be fully effective, PSYOP must be conducted face-to-face by trained PSYOP personnel.

The American way of war, which involves massive use of firepower, much of it unobserved, is often counter-productive with respect to PSYOP in a counterinsurgency environment. "The significance of the reliance on psychological warfare to replace firepower in counterinsurgency is that it reduces the need for combat operations, thus minimizing the destruction of life and property which so often impacts upon the population. It is also much cheaper, a factor not to be ignored."

INSIGHTS

Civil  
Affairs

- Military civic action had its uses, but there was a tendency for the US to provide things to the Vietnamese as a substitute for communicating ideas to them.
- American governmental agencies involved with pacification and civil affairs programs tended to continue to support and justify those programs, good or bad, which they themselves had helped initiate or in which they had a parochial interest in perpetuating.
- The establishment of CORDS in 1967 provided a single focus of authority, responsibility, and centralized management in Washington and in the field; CORDS is a useful model for future civic action situations.
- The US Marine leadership found that military civic action--dealing directly with the Vietnamese people on a small scale person-to-person basis--was a successful way of winning peasant support and defeating the insurgents locally, but unfortunately the GVN leadership, as well as ARVN and provincial officials, did not support fully the Marine Combined Action Platoon (CAP) program. The peasants tended to develop a loyalty to US Marines instead of to their own military or government officials, and though locally successful, Marine CAP and other MILCAP programs failed to help the GVN win the political support necessary for survival as a viable political entity.
- Civil affairs functions have limited application except in war, so it is inevitable that in peacetime the active forces will at best have a minimal capability for conducting civil affairs; the Reserve Components can and should maintain and keep current a significant civil affairs capability. When committed in a combat environment, civil affairs specialists should be assigned for periods of sufficient duration for them to be effective rather than for the limited one-year tour that prevailed in RVN.
- One of the greatest weaknesses in RVN was the absence of an institutional structure of government, and neither US nor GVN leaders learned how to create that structure; President Thieu failed to build an organic, widely based institution of government in the favorable period after Tet 1968, and that, in part, was a failure of civil affairs.
- The people of South Vietnam did not rally to support the NLF or the DRV: not in 1963 when President Diem was killed, not in 1968 during the communist Tet offensive, not during the Easter offensive in 1972, and not even in 1975 when PAVN forces were obviously about to win a final victory. Pacification was working.



LESSONS

In a counterinsurgency situation, successful civil affairs operations frequently have more lasting importance than winning conventional battles. Successful civil affairs programs are those that win the support of the population for the national leadership which is essential in a counterinsurgency war. Civil affairs programs demonstrate the interest of the national leadership in the welfare of the people by providing security and improvements in the standard of living of the local population. In a counterinsurgency situation, it should be recognized that military operations should support civil affairs objectives. Therefore, one of the obvious requirements in any counterinsurgency situation should be the appropriate training in and importance of civil affairs, both for unit commanders and civil affairs specialists.

A policy of limited tours of duty for military personnel reduces the effectiveness of both military and pacification efforts, disrupts organizational cohesiveness, fails to capitalize on hard-won expertise, and requires immense financial and personnel expenditures.

A successful civil affairs effort requires a single focus of authority and responsibility -- centralized management -- both in Washington and in the field.

Civil affairs programs must involve the support of the host-country national leadership as well as local officials and the general population in order to achieve national solidarity and political stability of the host government.

INSIGHTS

Measures of  
Progress, or  
Keeping Score

- The most pernicious measure of progress in Vietnam was the body count, not because casualty statistics are of themselves wrong or distasteful but because of the use made of the statistics. The perception of success in a given engagement in the Vietnam War usually derived from the body count, later augmented by the captured weapons count. Officers' efficiency reports and the allocation of combat support assets were strongly influenced in many organizations by relative standings in racking up a high body count. The often warped interest in body count provided an inducement for countless tactical unit commanders to strive for a big kill (whether legitimate or feigned) in preference to providing security for a hamlet or village.
- In many cases the statistics used as measures of progress in Indochina were very misleading and had no bearing whatever on actual progress; for example:
  - Unit days in the field and numbers of patrols dispatched became ends in themselves and as important as results achieved.
  - The enormous tonnages of bombs dropped became goals to be equalled or exceeded, yet about 75% of the aircraft sorties flown were not closely linked to ground combat but rather to the interdiction effort which, itself, generated questionable statistics.
  - The preponderance of artillery fires (except for Tet '68 and other major engagements) were unobserved fires, adding to the "rounds expended" statistics and often increasing the number of disaffected or refugee South Vietnamese.
- "Killed by Air" (KBA) statistics were particularly inaccurate and they became subject to frequent challenge by the media to the degree that CG 7th Air Force General Momyer stopped their use.
- So much unnecessary data were collected that manual and computer systems were nearly swamped, and much of the effort was self-generated by higher military commands, including the JCS in the search for useful measures.
- The Hamlet Evaluation System (HES) initiated in 1967 replaced the biased, inaccurate, exaggerated, and often self-serving Joint GVN-US reporting system; HES contained some inaccuracies, but the US advisors had the final word, and higher echelons could not make changes in the advisors' evaluation of hamlet security. As a consequence, the HES system provided very good data on trends and was generally considered to have been the most effective system that could have been implemented.

LESSONS

In warfare, comparative statistics play an important role in the planning, conduct, and analysis of battles. Those statistics are a valid and necessary tool, but the criteria for measurement must be meaningful, the reporting system must be inspected, supervised and disciplined, and the statistics must not be permitted to become ends in themselves. Casualty statistics, unfortunately known as body count in Vietnam, will continue to be an important analytical device, but care should be exercised in how and where these statistics are presented.

In any future conflict situation, regardless of the intensity, and/or scope, US leaders and commanders at all levels will continue to have a need to know the status of progress being made by their forces in combat. Furthermore, the advent of scientific management techniques and increased use of computers in data collection and analysis by the DOD will make quantitative analysis of that data a matter of course. Therefore, it is incumbent on the US military establishment to analyze the full spectrum of possible conflict situations to determine in advance the measures of progress which would be most useful to future decision makers.

Civilian leaders and military commanders should remember that combat data collection, compilation, and analysis need to be properly interpreted, balanced by professional experience and judgment, and properly employed in the evaluation and crafting of policies and strategies. A failure in any of those areas would make even the best data of marginal value, and prevent the necessary blending of art and science.

INSIGHTS

Operational  
and Techno-  
logical  
Innovations

- Most operational innovations were the result of the application of human ingenuity in the field, proposed and recommended or constructed by soldiers in the ranks rather than by filtering down from a research agency or senior command level.
- Militating against the countrywide implementation of a practical innovation was the lack of sufficient cross-fertilization of good ideas or lessons learned. Army lessons learned were passed through the chain of command to USARV where they were staffed and then sent to CONUS. Some of the lessons learned were published in USARV media, but, for the most part, a good idea or innovation devised in a US unit in the Delta seldom reached the ears of the soldier in I Corps to the north.
- The 12-month tour also mitigated the spread of lessons learned because newly arrived personnel were usually not aware of what had proved disastrous or feasible in the past. Institutional memory was also degraded by the six-month command tour.
- Several useful technological developments resulted from the extensive R&D effort pursued during the Vietnam War, including:
  - In aerial combat: improvements in the air-to-air missiles and development of effective air-to-air tactics which materially altered the kill ratio in aerial combat from about 2-to-1 to approximately 12-to-1 in favor of the US.
  - In air-to-ground combat: The development of "smart bombs" coupled with effective ECCM equipment, tactics, and techniques made possible the devastating Linebacker I and II attacks against North Vietnam. Fixed-wing gunships and use of long-range navigation (LORAN D) were also important developments.
  - In ground combat: The evolution of the various helicopters used in airmobile operations and improvements in their operational capabilities, ordnance, tactics and techniques was perhaps the most conspicuous development in this category. Night vision devices made an important and welcome contribution.
- Sensors were improved significantly and, after being grossly misused in the McNamara Line (Project MASON or Operation DYE MARKER), proved to be extremely useful in the defense of Khe Sanh (1968). That experience illustrates that to be effective, even the most sophisticated and useful devices have to be used properly.

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- The Defense establishment was poorly organized and its procedures were too cumbersome for quick-reaction R&D support. Those developing technology rarely had control of the funds required for the development. The Navy was the only Service which consistently permitted those who were in control of the technical aspects of R&D to have control of the funding.
- The airmobile concept was proven valid in the specific environment in which it was employed in Vietnam, where the US had air supremacy and enemy air defenses within RVN were not sophisticated through 1972. The helicopter's survivability can only be assessed in the context of the enemy's location, weapons, and air defense capabilities and the scenario in which the helicopter will be employed plus the suppressive fire power available. The Soviets studied the airmobile operations in Vietnam and have since improved and enlarged their capability. Someone learned a lesson.
- The time, effort, priorities, and funds given to the production of technical innovations during the Vietnam War were a significant, positive factor in the prosecution of the war. Without technical innovations, the war would have been even more costly in lives.

### LESSONS

It requires an organized effort to relate field commanders' requirements to scientific capability, and, to be effective, the scientific R&D effort should include joint representation. In time of hostilities, special funding is required to overcome the lack of lead time normally found in the budget cycle.

The military Services, except for the Air Force, tend to be too slow in fielding new materiel and in going into procurement.

Quick reaction to requirements can be obtained best if Service R&D organizations are allocated funds and technical responsibility for examining and resolving specific requirements.

INSIGHTS

Allies

- The call for Third Nation (Free World) military forces in support of South Vietnam came principally from the US and was supported reluctantly by the GVN. The military/combat assistance from Third Countries was minimal except for Australian and New Zealand forces and was, in the cases of the Thai and Filipino forces, actually more of a liability.
- Our experience with our Asian allies in South Vietnam highlighted another important issue - Asians do not necessarily get along better with other Asians than do whites. The US desire to gain more flags, and specifically to gain Asian flags, resulted in the introduction of nationalities which were not always compatible with the native South Vietnamese. Specifically, the South Vietnamese feared the South Korean soldiers and found them to be arrogant and cruel.
- Finally, the way in which the USG opted to fight in Vietnam and the command arrangements that evolved were inefficient. There does not appear to be any evidence that the number of flags in RVN cloaked the US/Free World operations with any greater legitimacy than otherwise would have existed. The principal value of allied participation seems to have been the size of the ROK forces, which enabled them to control a substantial amount of territory in II CTZ, thereby facilitating the economy of force operations characterized by the US 4th Infantry Division in the Central Highlands.

LESSONS

Our experience with coalition war in Vietnam suggests the need for carefully examining the advantages and disadvantages of the participation of Third Nation forces in a limited war; psychological and political support of allies are needed, but it is essential that the separate allies' interests and objectives regarding participation in the effort be considered also. By knowing one's allies better, it may be possible to anticipate the extent of their contribution to the effort and the cost to the US of that contribution.

It may be more appropriate to deploy an ally's small elite forces than to use large cumbersome units. Attaching an ally's battalions or brigades to a US division as was done during the Korean War would be a more effective use of troops, assuming that such a relationship was feasible politically from the Allies' standpoint.

The separate or mutual goals of allies may change over time and thereby strengthen or weaken an alliance; it behooves a nation continually to assess its treaty commitments and obligations and to be prepared to extricate itself from those which lose their usefulness. Once entered into and while in force, treaties should be respected and their provisions adhered to.

In the desire to gain more flags in any contingency situation, US decision makers should carefully weigh the advantages in receiving moral and political support from some allies in place of support from possibly cumbersome, inept, or expensive combat units.

OVERALL LESSON FOR BOOK 2, VOLUME VI

Many of the functions analyzed in this book tend to be neglected in peacetime on the operational and tactical levels and are left to the initiative of the various specialists, many of whom are in the Reserve Components. Under the pressure of war, these functions are expanded rapidly and expensively, and often each develops an almost irreversible and independent rationale and momentum, which tends to frustrate unity of effort.



CHAPTER 9  
INTELLIGENCE

We wired the Ho Chi Minh Trail like a drugstore pinball machine and we plugged it in every night

Unidentified USAF officer

... I don't know of any technological advances that are going to help us find an enemy as skillful, tough, politically savvy, clever and elusive as our NVA/VC.

General Bruce Palmer, Jr., USA 1/

A. INTRODUCTION

The US effort to find the Vietnamese enemy and determine his operational intent was one of the most comprehensive and sophisticated wartime intelligence operations in this country's history. This effort developed in a piecemeal fashion but in the end evolved into an operation requiring tens of thousands of operations officers, analysts, and technicians and untold millions of dollars. The scope of the total US Intelligence effort is not well known to this day, and some details probably will never surface. Indeed the sheer size and complexity of this effort made its management very difficult.

The North Vietnamese and Viet Cong were difficult targets. They employed limited communications, moved mainly on foot, and used every sanctuary available in Laos and Cambodia. Time after time, enemy forces displayed a flair for battlefield surprise, deceptions, and brilliant countermeasures to offset the combined efforts of US and South Vietnamese intelligence. This ability would prove to be a critical factor in the waging and the outcome of the war.

American successes and failures in Vietnam were often a direct result of the quality of intelligence; in effect, every battle is a dialogue between the plans of two opposing forces, and battle plans cannot be well made without some type of knowledge about the other side. The quality of

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intelligence in Vietnam, it is clear in retrospect, ranged from abysmally poor to superb; if the quality of this intelligence had been directly related to its quantity, the end result of the war might have been vastly different. In many cases, individuals who performed in intelligence missions displayed courage, brilliance, and unparalleled dedication. According to numerous accounts many of these individuals outperformed the system by a wide margin.

Though various factors made intelligence gathering in Vietnam difficult, the US intelligence organizations were at least fortunate in having a relatively extended period of time in the 1950s and early 1960s in which to organize their information-collection effort. To this period we must now turn.

### B. GETTING INVOLVED (1950-1960)

Three fundamental perceptions dominated US thinking and policy-making on Indochina during the early 1950s.<sup>2/</sup> One was this increased importance of Asia in world politics, brought about largely by the communist victory in China in 1949 and the outbreak of the Korean War a year later. The second perception was a tendency to view communist successes throughout the world as a monolithic threat, directed from Moscow. The third perception held that the attempt of the Viet Minh regime to evict the French was an integral part of this worldwide communist advance.

US policy makers were pre-occupied with crises in other areas of the world and did not focus their intelligence resources on Indochina throughout the 1950s; crises elsewhere demanded higher priority. Instead, the US relied heavily on information from the French, and that information was potentially misleading. Moreover, the technique of dispatching high-level missions to gather information for key policy decisions proved to be unsatisfactory. The Saigon Military Mission of 1954-55, headed by Col. Edward Lansdale, succeeded in training Vietnamese commandos and dispatched a team ashore in Haiphong in April 1955. These types of operations emphasized psywar and sabotage, but they were on a very limited scale and produced little useful intelligence information.<sup>3/</sup>

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Perhaps the most important estimates produced early in this period were those assessing the probability and nature of any PRC or USSR reaction in the event US forces intervened at Dien Bien Phu. (See Table 9-1.) 4/

In the mid 1950s the US lacked critical information about the situation in the Vietnam countryside, known in British terms as "Special Branch Intelligence". The MAAG element in Saigon had no intelligence collection function. Intelligence was drawn from a narrow and frequently unreliable range of sources, chiefly Vietnamese. No National Intelligence Estimates (NIE) were published on South Vietnam between 1956 and 1959.5/

By the late 1950s, however, US intelligence capabilities had improved somewhat. In-depth appraisals indicated that Diem had a serious insurgency problem and other appraisals were skeptical of his leadership and predicted widespread dissatisfaction with his regime.

This view was not unanimous in the intelligence community. In mid-1959 Ambassador Durbrow and General Williams of the MAAG assured the Senate Foreign Relations Committee that South Vietnam's internal security was in no danger and that Saigon was in a better position to cope with a North Vietnamese invasion than it ever had been.6/ In the late 1950s US policy remained staunchly behind Diem.

The actual situation was far more serious, as subsequent intelligence reporting would clearly indicate. In 1960 a series of bleak US appraisals reported increased VC strength and activity in the countryside. One assessment of March 1960 noted VC plans to launch large-scale guerrilla warfare that year.7/

US intelligence efforts were not limited to the territory of South Vietnam. The CIA further supported Vietnamese efforts to recruit and train "mountain scouts" in the Second Corps area of Vietnam to patrol along the Cambodian border to detect communist infiltration there.8/

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TABLE 9-1. SIGNIFICANT INTELLIGENCE DOCUMENTS DURING EARLY STAGES  
OF US INVOLVEMENT (1950-59)

<u>TITLE</u>	<u>DATE</u>	<u>TOPICS</u>
CIA Est. SE-53	December 18, 1953	Soviet, PRC reactions to possible US ground, air, naval intervention in Indochina
SNIE 10-4-54	June 15, 1954	Communist reaction to possible US air and naval aid to French forces in Indochina
"Lansdale Team Report"	1955	Summary of activities of covert Saigon Military Mission in 1954-55
1959 NIE for Vietnam	1959	Serious reservations about Diem's leadership. "...dissatisfaction will grow, particularly among those who are politically conscious."

NOTE: No NIE's for Vietnam published between 1956 and 1959.

SOURCE: Gravel Pentagon Papers

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The intelligence capability of the South Vietnamese was weak during the 1950s and generally remained so in subsequent decades. The South Vietnamese relied heavily on the French Deuxieme Bureau until 1954. The French took everything home (including files and collection systems) when their forces withdrew that year.<sup>9/</sup> From 1954 to 1963, South Vietnamese military intelligence collected mostly political intelligence. Unfortunately, the US relied on the South Vietnamese for much information during that period.

### C. AS COUNTERINSURGENTS (1961-1964)

As President Kennedy took office in January 1961, his aides and officials found that policy makers in Washington were not fully apprised of the situation in Vietnam. That month Edward Lansdale (then a brigadier general) returned to Vietnam and found that the VC had made more progress than he had realized from reading the reports received in Washington. The president authorized a large package of intelligence operations (see Table 9-2) in May 1961 and ordered the extension of counterinsurgency efforts in October of that year.<sup>10/</sup> As a result of these efforts, US involvement in Vietnam was far greater than commonly realized. By October 1961, however, these efforts still had not paid off in good reporting. In a report prepared following his visit that month, General Maxwell Taylor cited lack of intelligence as one key problem.<sup>11/</sup>

In 1962 and 1963, a package of bold collection operations was managed by the 303 Committee (later renamed the 40 Committee, charged with approval of the most sensitive intelligence missions).<sup>12/</sup> The so-called De Soto patrols-US Navy destroyer patrols along the DRV coastline which probed the North Vietnamese radar system--began in 1962. The 3rd Radio Research Unit of the

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TABLE 9-2. KEY INTELLIGENCE RELATED DECISIONS OF MAY 1961

- Establish radar surveillance coverage of SVN territory to detect communist overflights.
- MAP support to SVN Junk Force to prevent maritime clandestine supply and infiltration into SVN.
- Establish effective intelligence system on Laos border, using human sources and regular aerial surveillance.
- Infiltrate teams with civilian cover into southern Laos to locate VC bases and LOCs.
- Begin unilateral COMINT collection by ASA.
- ASA to train RVNAF in tactical COMINT.
- Penetrate VC mechanism with human sources.
- Dispatch agents into DRV (operation Farmhand).
- Begin leaflet and gray propaganda (uncertain source) broadcasts into DRV.
- Penetrate South Vietnamese government and other political forces to measure support of regime and give early warning of coup attempts.

### COMMITMENT:

40 extra CIA officers and \$1.5 million  
78 ASA troops and \$1.2 million (unilateral program)  
15 ASA troops (to train RVNAF)

SOURCE: NY Times, Pentagon Papers

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Army Security Agency was organized from within assets of US Army Security Agency Pacific and began operations in Saigon in early 1961. The main operational elements came from an ASA unit in the Philippines which had followed the North Vietnamese training and deployment of military forces for several years. The USMC 1st Radio Company joined an element of the 3rd Radio Research Unit and began operations in Pleiku in 1962.13/

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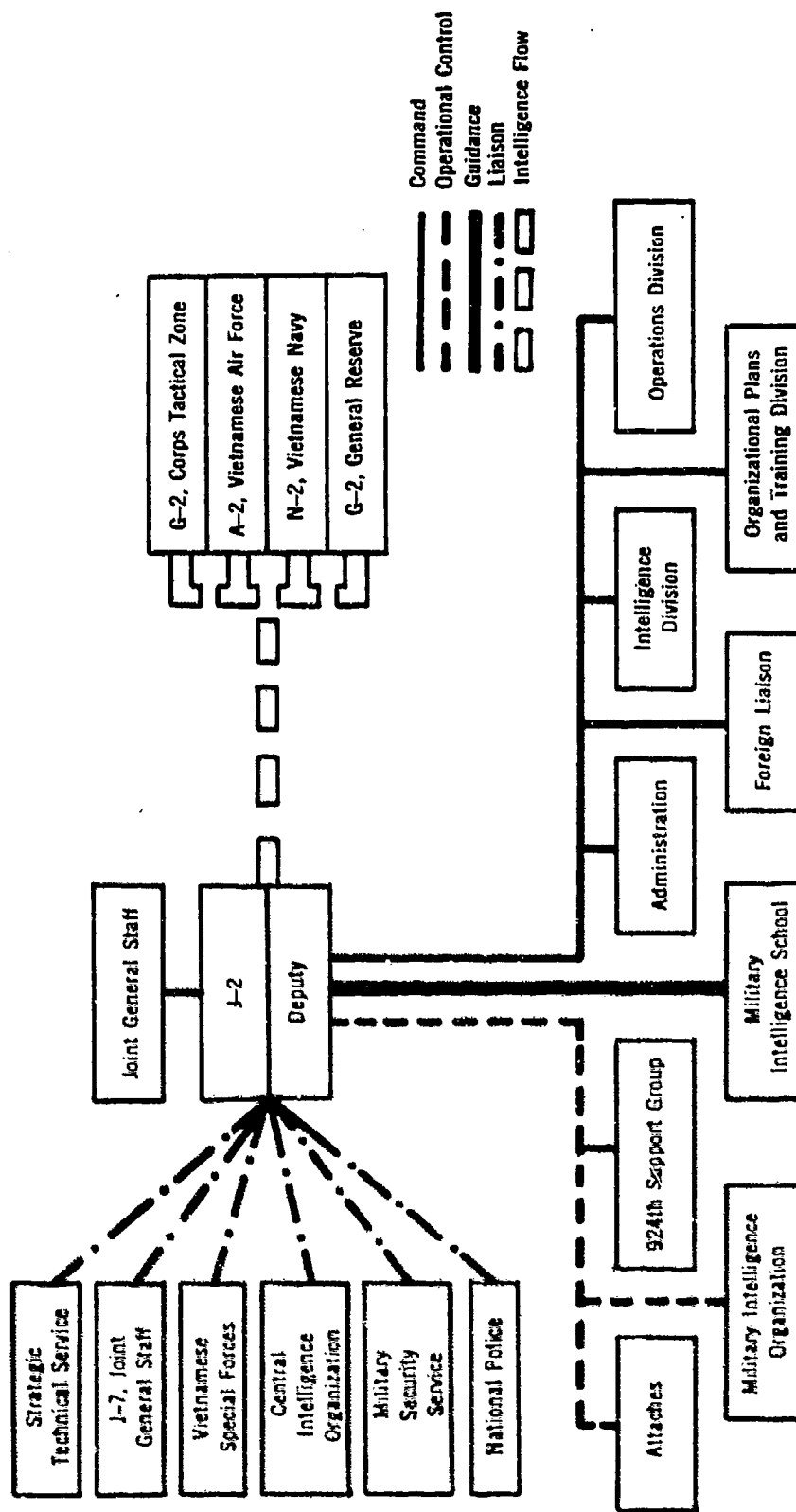
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Some US advisors working with ARVN units during this time quickly recognized the limitations of South Vietnamese intelligence capabilities and the local attitudes about intelligence data. According to one account, "Rosy reports from the provinces made it unappealing to sustain casualties engaging an enemy who was said to have been driven from the area."<sup>17/</sup> The unwieldy South Vietnamese intelligence structure was no match for its communist counterpart (see Figure 9-1), as the GVN never had an integrated intelligence structure.<sup>18/</sup> The GVN political leadership kept its intelligence agencies fragmented, in the belief that any one intelligence official who knew "too much" would be a threat to the regime. In addition, the communists almost certainly had numerous penetrations of ARVN and South Vietnamese intelligence agencies by this time. Unfortunately, US planners still relied on intelligence from South Vietnamese units and officials, even though the reporting was often of the "this is what happened" variety. CIA officials rated most South Vietnamese services as "C-3" to denote their reliability and accuracy of their information (this scale ran from A to F to denote reliability and from 1 to 6 to indicate accuracy). There was also a general anti-French feeling which influenced much of the South Vietnamese intelligence analysis with the result that much operational effort was directed against French plantations without any solid intelligence.

During the early 1960's, a serious problem emerged that would continue throughout the conflict--a general lack of coordination of US collection activities. Each agency in Vietnam had a different picture of the enemy, a result of the agencies' differing charters, collection efforts and interests. One informed source notes that "everyone who could get his hands on resources appeared to take off on his own pet project with little concern for and often no coordination with others operating in the same area."<sup>19/</sup> (See Table 9-3)<sup>20/</sup>

Defense Secretary Robert S. McNamara noted the weaknesses of US intelligence in Vietnam following a trip there in December 1963. He claimed that "the Country Team" lacks leadership, and has been "poorly informed". One of the most serious shortcomings in the US effort was "a grave reporting weakness."<sup>21/</sup>





454178W

SOURCE: McChristian, Military Intelligence, p. 169

Figure 9-1. Republic of Vietnam Armed Forces Intelligence Organization

TABLE 9-3. SIGNIFICANT INTELLIGENCE DOCUMENTS DURING PERIOD OF US COUNTERINSURGENCY (1961-64)

<u>TITLE</u>	<u>DATE</u>	<u>TOPIC</u>
NIE 50-61	March 28, 1961	VC control of most of the country-side.
RFE-3 (State INR)	November 1, 1961	Reported increased VC activity during first half of 1961.
SNIE 10-4-61	November 5, 1961	DRV would respond to increased US troop commitment by giving more support to VC; air attacks on DRV would not make VC cease aggression in South.
NIE 53-63	April 17, 1963	Although fragile, the situation in S. Vietnam did not appear serious; general progress reported in most areas.
SNIE 53-2-63	July 10, 1963	Political crisis in SVN arising from Buddhist protest.
DIA Intel Sum	July 17, 1963	Military situation unaffected by the political crisis. GVN prospects for continued counterinsurgency progress "certainly better" than in 1962. VC activity reduced, but VC capability essentially unimpaired.
CIA memo for Sec Def, Sec State, et. al.	February 17, 1964	Serious and steadily deteriorating situation in GVN. VC gains and quality and quantity of their arms had increased. Strategic Hamlet Program "at virtual standstill." The insurgency tide seemed to be "going against GVN" in all four Corps.

SOURCE: Gravel, Pentagon Papers

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The CIA dispatched a special group to the Saigon embassy in February 1964 to survey the counterinsurgency reporting, to recruit new sources, and to make recommendations for improving both South Vietnamese and US reporting machinery. General Harkins, the US commander of MACV, took exception to some findings, however both he and the CIA Station Chief agreed that past performance by American intelligence had not been good.22/

Also in February 1964, an elaborate program of covert operations directed by the military against the DRV was set in motion under OPLAN 34A.23/ (See Table 9-4). According to official US documents, the primary goal and intention of OPLAN 34A was to punish the DRV for its aggression in the South.24/ Intelligence gathering was important, but it took a supporting role.

Despite the increasing collection efforts beginning in 1962, the US country team remained in the dark about events on many occasions, particularly with regard to South Vietnamese political maneuvering. US intelligence was somewhat better tuned to enemy main force units; the makeup of the Viet Cong Infrastructure (VCI) would remain a mystery for years to come despite the fact that the VCI should have been a priority intelligence target.

### D. OUR SORT OF WAR (1965-1968)

When American combat troops were sent to Vietnam in 1965, the Army intelligence resources needed for deployment there were not ready. Great efforts were made to provide them as quickly as was feasible, but more than two years would be required to recruit, train, and dispatch most of the trained intelligence personnel that the Army would need in Vietnam. In July 1965, there were only 320 Army MI troops serving in Vietnam. This number would grow to over 3,000 by mid-1967.25/ There were about 1,700 ASA troops in Vietnam in support of J2 MACV and Army combat troops. That number increased to nearly 5,700 by 1967.27/ The CIA reported with accuracy the deteriorating pacification situation in the countryside in early 1965 (see Table 9-5).28/

TABLE 9-4. MACV/CIA PROGRAM OPLAN 34A.

PARAMILITARY OPERATIONS

- Capture of prisoners
- Physical destruction of some installations

ns

PSYOPS

- Leaflet drops
- Propaganda kit deliveries
- Radio broadcasts

INTELLIGENCE COLLECTION

- U-2 missions over DRV
- COMINT

HISTORY:

- First proposed in May 1963
- JCS instruction for program on 26 November 1963
- LBJ approved program on 16 January 1964
- First OPLAN 34 A operations on 1 February 1964
- Phase One to run from February to May 1964
- Phases Two and Three to follow (same categories of action, but of increased tempo and magnitude, designed to inflict increasingly greater punishment on DRV in return for aggression).

SOURCE: Gravel, Pentagon Papers.

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1. Combined Intelligence

The US and Vietnamese forces pooled some of their resources to form the Combined Intelligence Center, Vietnam (CICV) in 1965. This center, in conjunction with other elements, had the mission to produce tactical intelligence as quickly as possible to satisfy commanders' requirements. Vietnamese intelligence resources and expertise provided the bulk of this tactical intelligence initially. CICV never achieved a high degree of professional efficiency in large measure because the one-year tours of US MI personnel did not permit them to implement proven intelligence techniques or to absorb a great amount of area knowledge. By late 1965, some 286 US personnel manned the American contingent at the CICV, most of them from the 519th Military Intelligence Battalion.29/

Other combined centers were established: the Combined Document Exploitation Center (CDEC), Combined Military Interrogation Center (CMIC), and the Combined Materiel Exploitation Center (CMEC). All four centers had separate US and Vietnamese elements, each with its own director. (See Figure 9-2).30/

Each combined intelligence center had its own unique operating conditions and problems. In the case of the CICV, the US and Vietnamese sides differed on order of battle (OB) counts of enemy forces, largely because of differing rules for accepting enemy strength figures. Moreover, the OB counts for Viet Cong Infrastructure (VCI) were not accurate, and the OB did not include enemy strength in the border areas of Laos, Cambodia, or the DRV. (These omissions were also made in the NIE on South Vietnam in

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TABLE 9-5. SIGNIFICANT INTELLIGENCE DOCUMENTS DURING PERIOD OF FIRST US COMBAT INVOLVEMENT (1965-68)

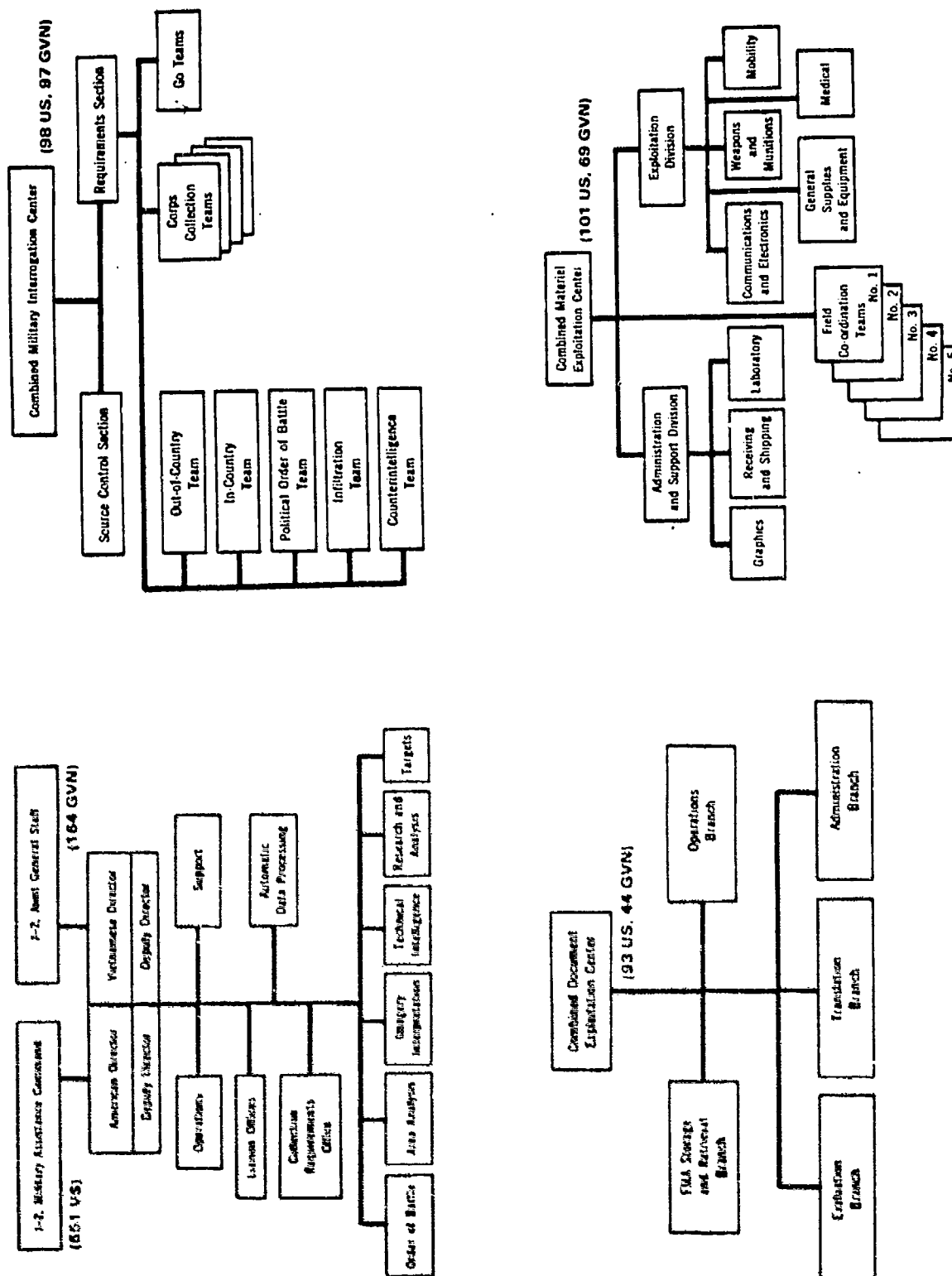
<u>TITLE</u>	<u>DATE</u>	<u>TOPIC</u>
CIA Monthly Report	January 21, 1965	Nationwide pacification program stalled.
CIA Monthly Report	February 17, 1965	Nationwide pacification effort has "barely moved ahead" since January 1, 1965, with serious deterioration in some areas (I and II Corps).
CIA Memo to Sec Def and Others	April 2, 1965	DCI McCone states present level of bombing not hurting DRV enough to make them quit; warned against introducing more US combat troops, as US could get mired down in a war it could not win.
DIA Memo to Sec Def	November 17, 1965	DIA Director General Carroll gives an appraisal of bombing of DRV with few bright spots.
SNIE 10-1-66	February 4, 1966	Increasing the scope and intensity of bombing, including attacks on POL would not prevent DRV support of higher levels of operations in 1966.
CIA SC No. 08440/66	June 8, 1966	Neutralization of bulk POL storage facilities in DRV would not in itself preclude Hanoi's continued support of essential war activities.
DIA Report	August 1, 1966	70% of DRV's large bulk POL storage capacity has been destroyed along with 7% of its dispersed storage.

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TABLE 9-5. SIGNIFICANT INTELLIGENCE DOCUMENTS DURING PERIOD OF FIRST US COMBAT INVOLVEMENT (1965-68) (CONTINUED)

<u>TITLE</u>	<u>DATE</u>	<u>TOPIC</u>
SNIE 13-66	August 4, 1966	DRV using the POL attacks as a lever to extract more aid from Soviets and Chinese
Joint CIA/DIA Assessment	September 12, 1966	Negative appraisal of POL attacks. No POL shortages evident, bombing has not caused insurmountable transportation problems, economic dislocation, or weakening of morale.
SNIE 11-11-67	May 4, 1967	Soviets will likely increase aid to DRV but not get the conflict to the negotiating table.
CIA Memo Nos. 0642/67 and 0643/67	May 12, 1967	Bombing has not eroded DRV's morale, downgraded its ability to support the war, nor significantly eroded its military-industrial base.
CIA Memo	May 26, 1967	87% of DRV's power grid capacity destroyed
CIA Assessment	February 29, 1968	The Communists probably intend to maintain widespread military pressures in SVN, with special effort to harass urban areas. Major objectives to drain US/ARVN resources and allow Saigon govt. to lose much of the countryside.
CIA Assessment	March 1, 1968	"We see no evidence yet that the GVN/ARVN will be inspired to seize the initiative, go over to the attack, exploit the Communist vulnerabilities, and quickly regain the rural areas. We doubt they have the will and capability to make the effort."

SOURCE: Gravel, Pentagon Papers



4841/78W

SOURCE: McChristian, Military Intelligence, pp. 27, 34, 41, 48

Figure 9-2. Organization of Combined Intelligence Centers, 1967



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August 1967.) The enemy documents examined by the CDEC became a trusted source of combat intelligence, and became increasingly abundant, although only 10% of all documents examined had any intelligence value. Operations at the CMIC were hampered because few US personnel could speak fluent Vietnamese, and they required local interpreters to interrogate prisoners. Thus, the US element could not obtain interrogation information as quickly or accurately as the Vietnamese element could. The CMEC published useful handbooks on enemy equipment, but its operations were hampered by a shortage of trained local technicians and the tendency of commanders to keep captured enemy gear as souvenirs.<sup>31/</sup>

Other than in these combined centers, little US-Vietnamese intelligence cooperation existed during the 1965-69 period. Staff-level exchanges of information did occur between MACV's J-2 and the Vietnamese Joint General Staff (JGS) J-2. There were four key elements of the basic agreement between MACV and the JGS in 1965 on intelligence coordination: the VC were the target of this effort; there would be no coordination with third countries and no operations in the territory of third countries; the US was to provide financial and materiel support; and the information collected was to be equally shared.<sup>31/</sup> A program was initiated in 1961 to train Vietnamese in tactical radio intercept (Project Saber Tooth). This program never reached viability due to lack of numbers of Vietnamese soldiers and officers in the program, lack of basic intelligence of the operators and lack of support of the program by JGS as to communications, equipment, funds and overall command acceptance. ASA provided the training and interface.

### 2. Collection Expands

The scope of ground operations increased in 1966 and with it the enhanced opportunity to collect battlefield intelligence. During that year, US and South Vietnamese forces captured documents revealing enemy battle plans, strategic guidance, tactical doctrine, personnel rosters, and evaluations of US and South Vietnamese forces. Allied intelligence exploited the information, most of which was gained through major penetrations of enemy base areas.

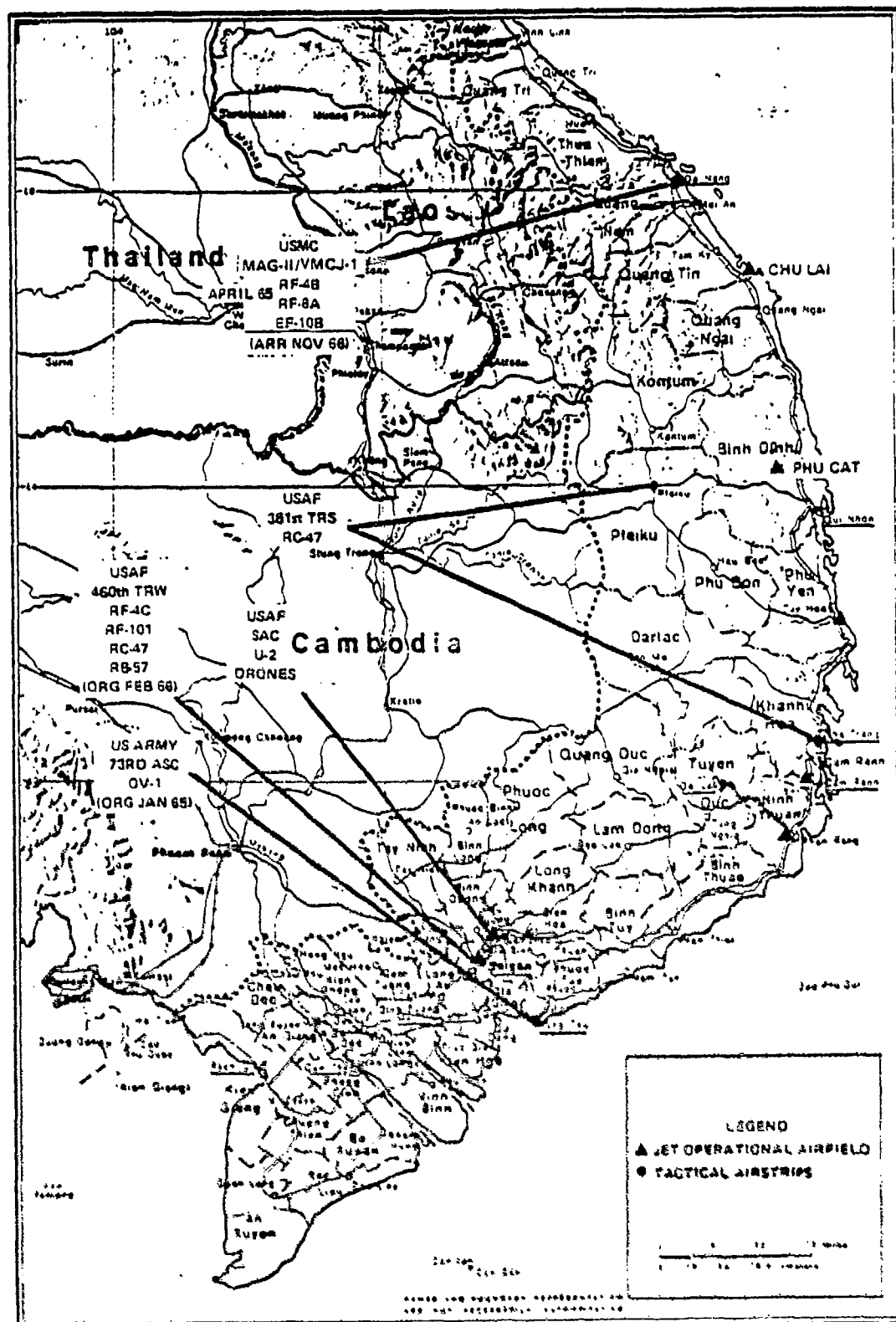
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Unconventional forces continued to collect intelligence in remote areas. Beginning in 1965, the Special Operations Group (SOG) mounted crossborder operations into Laos under the code name SHINING BRASS. Civilian Irregular Defense Groups and their US Army Special Forces advisors reported on enemy infiltration and supply in border areas. Both US and ARVN Special Forces operated deep reconnaissance units in areas where enemy forces operated.33/

Unconventional operations did manage to uncover useful intelligence on the enemy's logistics structure. Although the chain for dissemination of this information ran from the Special Operations Group (SOG) directly to DIA, COMUSMACV was an information addressee on all SOG messages that were pertinent to MACV operations. General Westmoreland states that unconventional operations furnished "vital" intelligence on enemy infiltration.34/ Nonetheless, some US analysts and policy makers lacked a clear understanding of the NVA/VC logistical system.35/

Attempts to determine levels of infiltration to the South by aerial photography were difficult and frequently complicated by the dense jungles in South Vietnam as well as by enemy capabilities to camouflage their units. After persistent efforts, aerial reconnaissance did locate hundreds of way stations, storage areas, and other potential targets. Occasionally some active traffic was observed on the Ho Chi Minh Trail network. Likewise, SIGINT provided current and predictive intelligence on personnel and logistical infiltration. (Ironically, many of these targets were not struck after they were found.) The OV-1 Mohawk became the workhorse of the Army's aerial reconnaissance effort, and provided very responsive intelligence with its onboard SLAR (side-looking airborne radar) which could be processed in flight. Most of the Army's OV-1 force was based in Vung Tau (see Map 9-1) with the 73rd Aerial Surveillance Company.36/ The USAF's 460th Tactical Reconnaissance Wing was organized at Tan Son Nhut in 1966 and covered targets in South Vietnam and adjacent border areas. The 432nd Tactical Reconnaissance Wing was formed in Udron, Thailand later that year to cover Laos and North Vietnam.37/

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Map 9-1. Major Aerial Reconnaissance Units, Late 1960's

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In the South, infrared (IR) imagery gained particular popularity with Army units, who used it to find VC installations. Photo interpreters gave priority to IR film, passing significant findings to ground units by telephone or radio.

The South Vietnamese had a small-scale photo reconnaissance effort, but relied mainly on US reconnaissance products. Information from US Buffalo Hunter drone missions was regularly passed to the GVN; that from RF-4 missions was passed only with a special request and need to know; information derived from U-2 and SR-71 missions was not passed except in very special cases and only with DIA approval.<sup>38/</sup> (Table 9-6 reflects major aerial photo assets in Vietnam in the 1960's.)<sup>39/</sup>

Meanwhile, the quality of human-source information collected and the resulting intelligence suffered for lack of proper management. The human-source collection effort, according to one account, far exceeded the capabilities of analysts, who were deluged with large numbers of marginal reports. For the collectors, success was measured in terms of quantity, rather than quality of reports. Thus, analysts fell behind by three to six months in processing raw reports into a useful data base. There was a large-scale duplication of effort between the US elements of CICV (which handled information classified no higher than Secret) and the US unilateral counterpart in MACV's J-2 (which handled sensitive all-source information). Until 1967, when a new building was available, MACV could not produce coordinated intelligence products under short deadlines due to unnecessary compartmentalization of production elements and the fact that those elements were widely scattered around the Saigon area with no secure telephone links. (See Figure 9-4 for the MACV MI structure in 1967.)<sup>41/</sup>

The CIA Station and MACV remained on opposite sides of the bureaucratic fence in 1966. Both groups opposed the suggestion that a single Director of Intelligence be appointed to manage the civilian and military intelligence structure. The CIA Station believed this suggestion to be "unwieldy and unworkable" because "this is not a theater of war."<sup>42/</sup>

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TABLE 9-6. MAJOR AERIAL PHOTOGRAPHY ASSETS IN VIETNAM

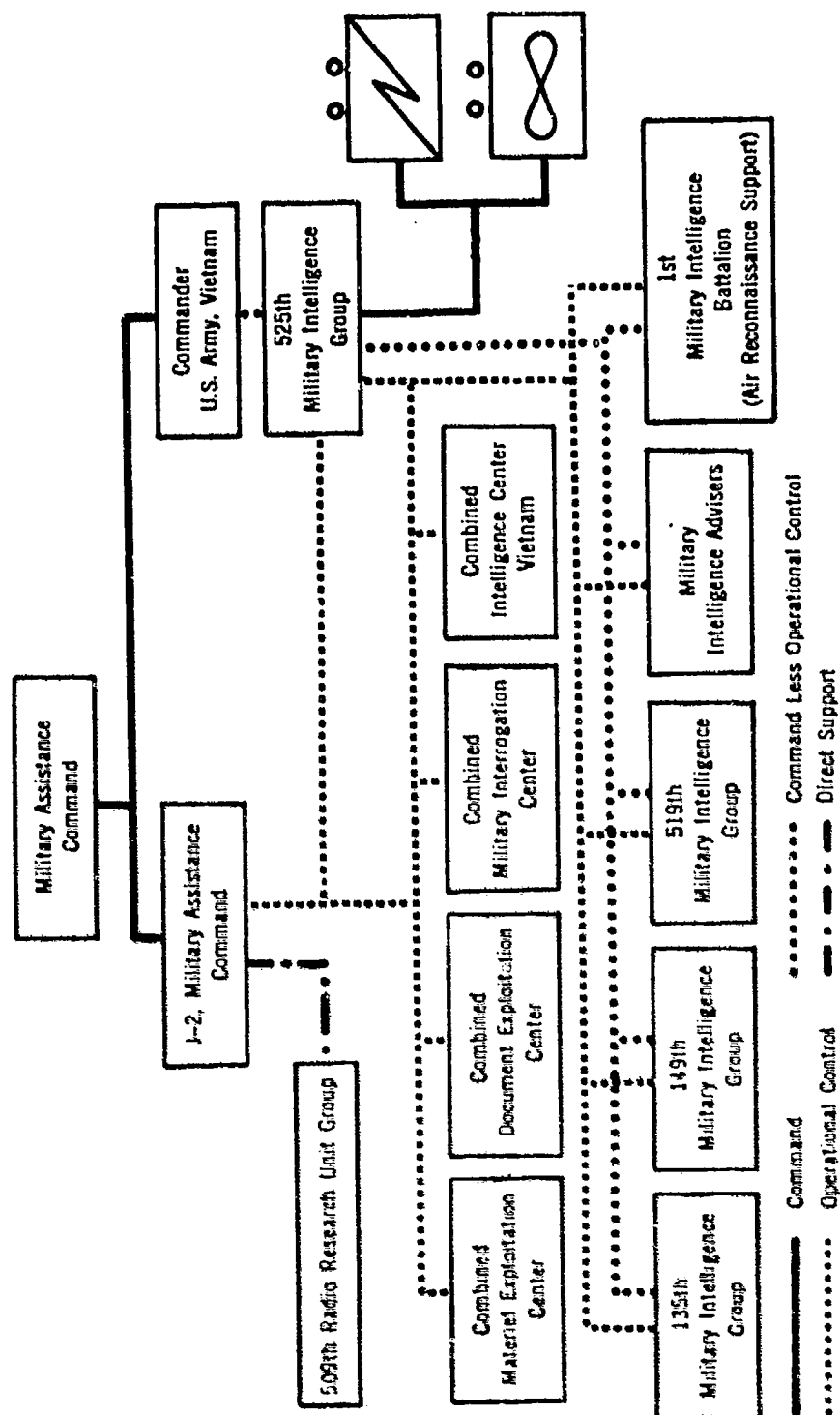
<u>AIRCRAFT</u>	<u>COULD ACCOMMODATE</u>
(USAF) RF-4C PHANTOM II	KA-55 (hi-alt), KA-56 (lo-alt), or KS-72 (very lo-alt) cameras, APQ-102 SLAR, AAS-18 IR
(USAF) FR-101 VOODOO	KA-1 (hi-alt), KA-56, KS-72 cameras
(USAF/Army) OIL BIRD DOG	hand-held cameras
(Army) OV-1B MOHAWK	KA-30 (oblique or vertical) camera, SLAR with in-flight processing
(Navy) RA-5C VIGILANTS	DA-50A, DA-51 A/B, DA-62A cameras, AN/APD-7 SLAR, AN/AAS-21 IR
<u>Services Also Employed:</u>	
USAF - - RC-47, RB-57, U-2, SR-71, BQM-34 drones (Buffalo Hunter)	
USA - - U-6A, YO-3A	
USMC - - RF-4B, RF-8B, EF-10B	
USN - - RF-4B, RF-8B	

SOURCE: See Endnote 36

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Figure 9-3. DELETED



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SOURCE: McChristian, Military Intelligence, p. 162

Figure 9-4. Military Intelligence Organization, 1967

Differences between CIA and MACV intelligence estimates of enemy strength came to a head in 1967.<sup>43/</sup> Based on a review of captured enemy documents, the CIA believed the number of VC in South Vietnam to be considerably higher than the official MACV estimate; the military conceded that enemy strength was greater than previously believed, but refused to raise enemy OB figures above 300,000. (See subparagraph 6 below on the TET '68 offensive).

The Army did enjoy some intelligence success during this period. Operation CEDAR FALLS, mounted in January 1967 in MR4, was the first large-scale operation to benefit from a methodology called "pattern activity analysis," a detailed automated plotting on maps of information on enemy activity obtained from a variety of sources over time. Both this operation and Operation JUNCTION CITY in the next month resulted in the capture of many documents and other valuable intelligence materials.

### 3. Technical Collection

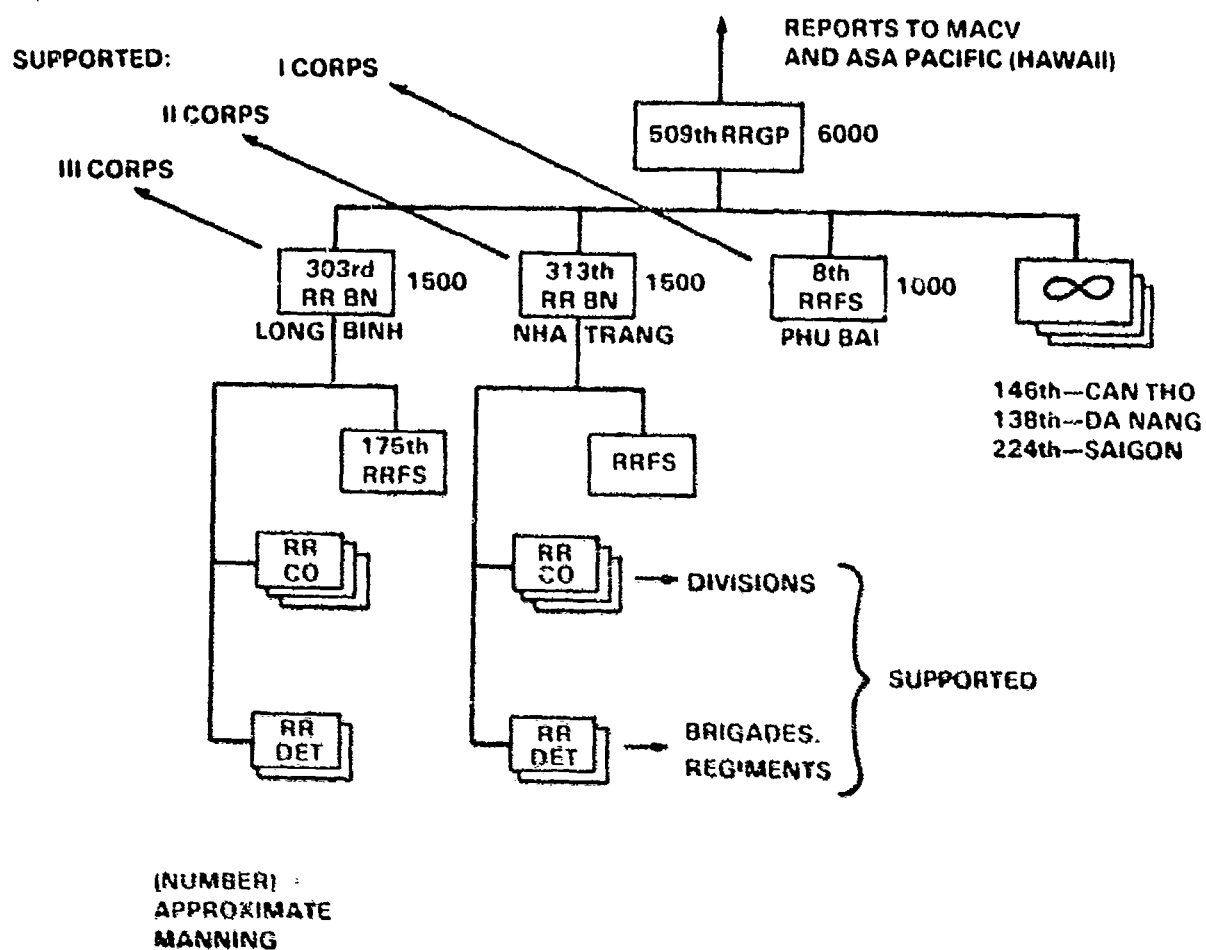
SIGINT operations continued to provide a valuable source of data. General Westmoreland believed SIGINT to be a major component of the intelligence effort in terms of accuracy and timeliness, and other accounts rate the US SIGINT effort as qualitatively better than that in any other recent war.<sup>44/</sup>

The 509th Radio Research Group (follow-on to the 3rd RRU) of the Army Security Agency (ASA) provided the bulk of the SIGINT effort in South Vietnam (see Figure 9-5), and forwarded reporting to MACV, ASA Pacific in Hawaii, and to national-level agencies in the US.<sup>45/</sup> ASA attempted to build an in-country (RVN) SIGINT analysis center, but was thwarted in this effort by NSA, which preferred to remain as the focal point of the SIGINT product. The 509th supported major units in Vietnam. In addition, selected units of the USMC's SIGINT element operated in northern South Vietnam, and a USAF Security Service unit based at Tan Son Nhut flew direction-finding (DF) missions with C-47 aircraft.

The SIGINT product was described as "fair" in 1965-66, but improved in 1967. That year ground-based units had improved their technique and Army aircraft began to fly on DF missions.<sup>46/</sup>



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SOURCE: BDM Interviews (See Endnotes)

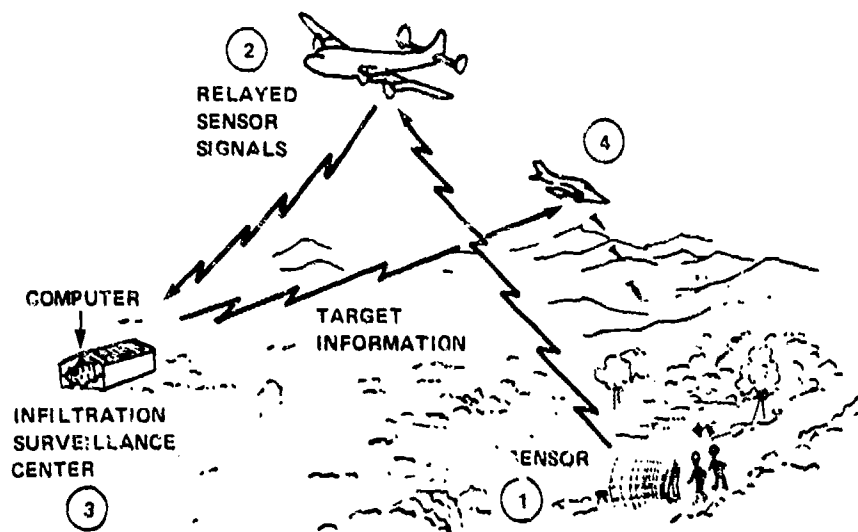
Figure 9-5. US Army Security Agency (ASA) Units in RVN in Late 1960s

Dissemination of SIGINT information remained a major problem. Few field commanders were cleared to receive the information--sometimes only up to three in a division--and the division G-2 frequently had to obscure the source. Possibly as a result, many US commanders did not understand SIGINT well. Much of the SIGINT collection data went back to the US for analysis, where analysts were often unaware of tactical commanders' requirements and of collateral reports which affected the real meaning of the SIGINT information. This often resulted in misinterpretation. In addition, SIGINT was difficult to pass along to the RVNAF because of its sensitivity and attendant security procedures. In contrast to most Army SIGINT operations, the US Marine units provided direct SIGINT support to III MAF and direct SIGINT support to Marine regiments and aircraft groups. Marine regimental commanders and their S-2s and S-3s were cleared for SIGINT.<sup>47/</sup> Only limited fusion of the total US/Vietnamese SIGINT product was effected in country, therefore timely detailed exploitation was not possible.

The South Vietnamese considered SIGINT a valuable source of information. Their SIGINT effort was directed by J-7 of the JGS. ASA was the principal US agency to coordinate with J-7 from 1961 to 1973. In the late 1960s, the US provided the lion's share of allied SIGINT: 95% of all the airborne RDF, and some 65% of ground-based RDF.<sup>48/</sup> The ARVN grew increasingly dependent on SIGINT as the war continued into the 1970's.

In further attempts to obtain accurate information on infiltration, the US began to deploy air-dropped sensors in Laos in support of the Igloo White program in late 1967 (see Figure 9-6).<sup>49/</sup> A modest effort at first, the program employed some 5,000 sensors in 1969 and 40,000 by 1972. General Westmoreland and others hailed the US sensor effort as a major breakthrough in the "electronic battlefield" of the future. The major drawbacks to this highly complex program were twofold: many analysts and technicians were required to manage its operations, and the sensors sometimes could be spoofed by animals, wind, rain, or enemy countermeasures. (See Table 9-7).<sup>50/</sup> As the war continued, US Army units came to rely

INTEGRAL ELEMENTS	MISSION
1 TENS OF THOUSANDS OF SENSORS ON HO CHI MINH TRAIL	DETECT ENEMY
2 RELAY AIRCRAFT ORBITING OVER LAOS (EC-121R, THEN QU-22B RPV)	RELAY SIGNAL TO ICS
3 INFILTRATION SURVEILLANCE CENTER (ISC) IN NAKHON PHANOM, THAILAND EQUIPPED WITH TWO IBM 360-65 COMPUTERS	PROCESS & ANALYZE SIGNAL, ALERT STRIKE PLANNERS
4 STRIKE AIRCRAFT (F-4, B-52, C-130 PAVE SPECTRE, HELICOPTER GUNSHIPS)	INTERDICT



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SOURCE: Dickson, Electronic Battlefield

Figure 9-6. Igloo White, 1967-1972

TABLE 9-7. SENSOR OPERATIONS AT A GLANCE

THREE BASIC TYPES IN VIETNAM

- Listening Devices to detect vehicles or voices.
- Seismic Devices to detect ground vibrations or marching men.
- "People Sniffers" to detect people through body odor.

SERVICE CONCEPTS

- US Army: Each battalion with 12 "packages", each with four sensors and a receiver.
- USMC: A SCAMP (Sensor Control and Management Platoon) attached to operational commanders.
- USAF: Large sensor array to detect infiltration and to trigger airstrikes.

SUCCESSFUL EMPLOYMENT

- US Army engagement at Fire Base Crook, June 1969.
- USMC defense of Khe Sanh, April 1968.
- USAF Igloo White program, 1967-72.
- ARVN sweep along Highway 7 near Krok, Cambodia, August 1971

KEY POINTS

- Sensors cannot win a battle (or the war) by themselves.
- Sensors can be spoofed, and were in Vietnam.
- Sensors must be employed together with other collection assets in a complementary family. In this way, the strengths of one type or asset can offset the weaknesses of another.

SOURCE: Multiple Unclassified Articles from 1970-71 Period

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increasingly on sensors to detect the enemy, and the South Vietnamese employed them effectively by 1971.

### 4. OPSEC and COMSEC

Another significant problem was the lack of operations security (OPSEC) and communications security (COMSEC) among US troops. Loose talk and the reluctance of some US divisions to change their radio call signs and frequencies for a year or more caused frequent compromises of US movements. By contrast, the enemy's COMSEC was very thorough and effective.

SECTION 5 DELETED

### 6. Tet Offensive

One major misunderstood issue of 1968 was the performance of US intelligence before the Tet Offensive in late January. Contrary to popular

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belief, US forces had some warning of impending hostile operations. SIGINT elements had received indications of an offensive and had alerted MACV. Moreover, the CIA's Saigon Station had "several productive spies" inside the enemy's high command, and one of them alerted the Station.<sup>53/</sup> Accordingly, three days after the initial assault, President Johnson stated that the attack had been "anticipated, prepared for, and met", although this overstated the case. US Intelligence did lack evidence as to the target cities, enemy methods, and scope of the offensive, which prompted some to cry "intelligence failure."

In particular, there was a serious disagreement between DOD and MACV on the one hand and CIA and State on the other on the estimate of VC order of battle, concerning various categories of guerrilla forces and infrastructure (VCI). The basic problem in estimating the size of the infrastructure stemmed from the inability of the intelligence community to agree on what constituted an infrastructure member. An out-of-date but clear example of the different assessments can be found in the figures tabled in April 1968 at an intelligence conference:<sup>54/</sup>

	<u>MACV</u>	<u>CIA</u>
NVA/VC main & local forces	123-133,000	135-145,000
Admin Services in RVN only	30- 40,000	65- 80,000
Guerrillas	<u>50- 70,000</u>	<u>90-110,000</u>
	203-243,000	290-335,000
VCI	75- 85,000	90-120,000
Other Irregulars	<u>Not Quantifiable</u>	<u>90-140,000</u>
	278-328,000	470-595,000

According to the CIA, MACV J-2 arrived at nation-wide strength totals by adding up supposedly "hard figures" received from intelligence officers in the field and compiled OB data unit by unit, applying rigid acceptance criteria when examining evidence. The CIA accused MACV intelligence personnel of not putting much credence in captured documents, prisoners, and soldiers, believing them to be random, spotty, and out of date.<sup>55/</sup>

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The JCS explained MACV's methodology as consisting of:<sup>56/</sup>

- Estimates based on OB holdings, "hard" intelligence data derived from such sources as captured documents, prisoner of war interrogation reports, and defector statements,
- Estimates complemented by all-source intelligence, "mathematically innovated into the estimates,"[sic],
- Estimates incorporating extensive strength data as reported directly from major field commands under very specifically supervised collection programs.

By including other irregular forces in the OB, the Joint Chiefs believed that the CIA reflected a military capability well beyond a realistic level, thereby attributing to the enemy an exaggerated military strength.<sup>57/</sup> That strength showed itself in the PLAF/PAVN Tet offensive which began on 30 January 1968.

It is not feasible to state how much of the intelligence shortcomings at Tet '68 derived from the differing OB figures. What can be said is that many military intelligence personnel and commanders reflected an unfortunate lack of appreciation of the importance of the VCI in the communist's scheme of things. Further, White House insistence on showing an enemy OB under 300,000 contributed to the obdurate position on OB taken by MACV J-2 and by senior DIA officials. According to Thomas Powers, CIA Chief Helms' biographer, in September 1967 an Army officer in Saigon confessed to CIA analyst Sam Adams that MACV J-2 personnel had been told to keep the figure under 300,000.<sup>58/</sup> Later, Mr. Helms signed Board of National Estimates (BNE) paper 14.3.67 reflecting the deflated military figures instead of CIA's figures, which were nearly double. Sam Adams, who first uncovered the accounting discrepancies, then began a serious attempt to have Mr. Helms fired. He didn't succeed, and Helms was reappointed as Director of Central Intelligence by the newly-elected President Nixon. Adams charged that Helms caved in under pressure; Helms contended that the argument got so complex he couldn't make heads or tails out of Adams' figures.<sup>59/</sup>

It must be noted that in 1967 the military chain of command was pointing to substantial progress and serious attrition of the enemy. It would have been embarrassing to double the enemy count. The White House would undoubtedly have opposed and prevented any upward changes in OB. When the Tet offensive burst over the country, US and GVN authorities were astounded at the breadth and nature of the attacks, the intensity of which reflected the surprising numerical strength of the VC and the organizational ability of the VCI. The point here is not that the VC/VCI were so badly marked that they never fully recovered, rather it is that neither US nor GVN authorities knew enough about the communist apparatus to evaluate properly and anticipate their capabilities and intentions.

The Tet Offensive may even be viewed as an enemy intelligence failure in some respects. The North Vietnamese had miscalculated badly in predicting that a general uprising would occur among the population in the South, and also in believing that a rapid victory would be attained as a result of the offensive.<sup>60/</sup> The enemy had also miscalculated in several tactical areas. Although the combined enemy forces had seized the initiative, the VC cadre system took a sound beating during the Tet Offensive, and the Phoenix Program prevented them from regaining lost ground.

In retrospect, the Tet Offensive represented a failure of the US public relations effort more than a "failure" of intelligence. (See Figure 9-7).<sup>61/</sup> In the fall of 1967, General Westmoreland claimed that the enemy's guerrilla forces had been "declining at a steady rate." Only four days before the Tet Offensive he said the enemy "had been driven away from population centers" and was "resorting to desperation tactics" which had failed thus far. President Johnson had discounted somber analysis by the CIA and some Pentagon offices, and instead seized upon General Westmoreland's upbeat reports to counteract public disillusionment with the war.<sup>62/</sup>

The performance of US Intelligence in Vietnam remained largely unchanged until President Nixon began the process of Vietnamization in 1969. During the 1965-68 period, the US began to introduce increasingly sophisticated technical reconnaissance assets and sensors, yet was losing the "battle" for human sources. Although exact numbers remain uncertain,



PRE-TET PERCEPTIONS OF THE ENEMY

"The enemy has many problems: He is losing control of the scattered population under his influence. He is losing credibility with the population he still controls. He is alienating the people by his increased demands and taxes, where he can impose them. He sees the strength of his forces steadily declining. He can no longer recruit in the South to any meaningful extent; he must plug the gap with North Vietnamese. His monsoon offensives have been failures. He was dealt a mortal blow by the installation of a freely elected representative government. And he failed in his desperate effort to take the world's headlines from the inauguration by a military victory."

General Westmoreland, "Progress Report on the War in Viet Nam," before the National Press Club, Washington, D.C., Nov. 21, 1967.

TET POST-MORTEM

The April, 1968, post-mortem done by a collection of intelligence officers discussed the general question of warning. It concluded that while units in one corps area were on alert, allied forces throughout the country generally were caught unprepared for what was unfolding. Certain forces even while "on a higher than normal state of alert" were postured to meet "inevitable cease-fire violations rather than attacks on the cities." In other areas "the nature and extent of the enemy's attacks were almost totally unexpected." One-half of the South Vietnamese army was on leave at the time of the attacks, observing a 36-hour standdown.

In testimony before this Committee, both General Graham and William Colby confirmed the fact of some amount of surprise. General Graham preferred to label it surprise at the enemy's "rashness." Mr. Colby spoke of a misjudgment of their potential "intensity, coordination and timing."

Even though quick corrective action was taken to salvage American equipment and protect U.S. personnel, the ultimate ramifications on political and military fronts were considerable. General Westmoreland requested a dramatic increase of 206,000 in U.S. troop strength, and additional equipment supplies. Secretary of Defense Clark Clifford began rethinking the substance of intelligence. A collection of intelligence officers finally briefed the President of the United States on the realities of the Vietnam War in mid-March, and a few days later he announced he would not seek re-election.

House Committee on Intelligence (Pike Committee) 1975

the enemy probably had at least several thousand agents within the South Vietnamese government and military structure by the 1968-1969 period, according to CIA analysts.

7. Domestic Surveillance

On the home front, US Army intelligence and other agencies had begun a sustained effort against antiwar groups. MI officers monitored these groups' demonstrations, and ASA monitored CB radio communications during the October 1967 march on the Pentagon, the April 1968 riots in Washington, the June 1968 Poor Peoples' March on Washington, and during both party conventions. It was discovered during subsequent Senate hearings that one Army headquarters unit in Texas had some 190 linear feet of dossiers and file cards dealing with particularly subversive groups and individuals.<sup>63/</sup>

These revelations came as a blow to the Army's public relations effort. The Army took the brunt of the criticism, even though these activities were authorized by competent civilian authority. Alerted in 1967 to possible civil disorders in as many as 100 cities, the Army authorized surveillance by every major command in the US of any potential troublemakers with whom the troops might have to cope in restoring order. By some accounts, the Army's domestic surveillance did get out of hand, and there is some doubt that the effort would have effectively countered uprisings in the major cities, had they occurred.

E. ON VIETNAMIZATION (1969-1972)

In 1969 the US began to turn over a number of intelligence projects to the Vietnamese as American combat forces were gradually withdrawn. Through the continued efforts of the MACV J-2, genuine US-South Vietnamese cooperation in intelligence was achieved for the first time, and the GVN relied on US intelligence to an increasing degree. The Vietnamese often assumed every piece of information from a US source to be valid, regardless of the competence or authority of the source.<sup>64/</sup> (See Figure 9-3 for examples of sources of information.)<sup>65/</sup>

Intelligence Information

Vietnam represented the largest intelligence effort by the US government in any one area since the Second World War. One hint of the extent of US collection activities is given in a National Security Study Memorandum, NSSM-1 of January 1969, which described the nontechnical sources in Vietnam:

- a. Voluminous reports from American advisors, civilian and military, working throughout Vietnam. These reports are both formal and informal. Some are written, many are conveyed to the Embassy through personal conversations with Embassy officers.
- b. Regular contacts by political officers and provincial reporters who operate out of the Embassy....
- c. Some limited and relatively unscientific opinion sampling carried out by Vietnamese teams trained and directed by American political officers.
- d. Contacts between Embassy officers and foreign journalists, visitors and scholars. Embassy officers seek to tap the knowledge gathered by journalists, scholars and visitors in both written and oral forms.
- e. Systematic screening of local publications, including such documents as political party organs as well as editorials in the regular vernacular press.
- f. Voluminous reports on the opinions of all these groups gathered through covert contacts by CIA officers and agents.

Figure 9-8. Some Sources of Information.

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Unfortunately, the US and GVN had not seized the initiative in the "intelligence war," and the balance of human sources still tilted in favor of the enemy. The US made little, if any, progress in improving collection management, and military intelligence forces generally continued to react to events rather than search out indications of impending enemy operations. These critical shortcomings could not be offset by an ever-growing array of technical collection devices. The GVN intelligence services improved their professionalism somewhat with increasing contact with their US counterparts, but the problems GVN services faced in the early and mid-1960s lingered on. Many ARVN commanders required their intelligence officers to produce assessments that supported the commanders' point of view. If, for example, a unit took heavy casualties, enemy OB estimates in that area could be inflated for the commander to save face. Other ARVN (and US) commanders did not recognize that battlefield intelligence was theirs to direct and use, and not the exclusive property and responsibility of their intelligence officers. Many Vietnamese commanders distrusted their intelligence officers, and few had a grasp of SIGINT. Few operations (US or ARVN) were mounted solely to collect intelligence.

The "coordination problem" particularly hurt the Vietnamese intelligence effort.<sup>66/</sup> The National Intelligence Coordination Committee (NICC) was established to oversee key GSV agencies but failed to perform its role as required. The agencies still operated independently of one another, and could not establish national intelligence planning and requirements or arrive at a comprehensive assessment of the military/ political situation.

### 1. Into the 1970s

US analysts of the CIA and other agencies were slow to recognize that the enemy's supply system in neighboring Cambodia had assumed great importance for operations in MR 3 and MR 4 in the south. After Tet, the communists became increasingly dependent on Cambodia as a base area, a sanctuary, and a funnel for military supplies. There remained a relative shortage of reliable collection there, and enemy forces employed bewildering techniques to mask their shipments from the port of Sihanoukville to South Vietnam.<sup>67/</sup>

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US intelligence failed to appreciate the changing situation in Cambodia after the fall of Prince Sihanouk in March 1970. Particularly significant was the lack of any firm data base on the Khmer Communist Army, (KCA), which precluded any accurate judgment of what that force could add to the total enemy effort. The USDAO Saigon and other US military intelligence forces had no charter to collect information on the Khmer Communist Army. The South Vietnamese neglected this force, and no American officials had been in Cambodia since 1965, when relations were broken. The CIA's estimate of 5,000-6,000 KCA (assembled by a sergeant in the Royal Cambodian Army in 1969) was raised to 15,000-30,000. The latter figure became the official US estimate after in-house CIA analysis suggested that the total KCA OB could be 100,000 or more men.<sup>68/</sup>

As announced by President Nixon, one major objective of the Cambodian incursion of April-June 1970 was the destruction of COSVN headquarters, which directed the enemy war effort in MR3 and MR 4. Although the operation damaged the enemy's logistics system there and gained precious time for the Vietnamization program, COSVN headquarters was not found. Unfortunately, President Nixon's speech on the night of the attack suggested that the operation would result in the capture of the command center (complete with top enemy generals, secret maps, and hot lines to Hanoi, Peking, and Moscow), and this aspect of the incursion was believed by some to be an intelligence "failure", and a military one as well.

Operation KINGPIN, the dramatic raid by US Special Forces on the Son Tay prison near Hanoi in November 1970, illustrated the continuing need for special operations capabilities <sup>69/</sup> and the requirement for timely all-source intelligence to support critical missions. Information on the locations of US POWs was one of the top ten KIJs (key intelligence questions) for the US intelligence community in 1970, and the most sensitive sources were tasked to determine the presence of US POWs at Son Tay. These sources included SAC SR-71s and Buffalo Hunter reconnaissance drones. Some US officials perceived another "intelligence failure" after the raiders did not find any POWs at Son Tay. Intelligence on terrain, installations, defenses and all other

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data needed to support the operation had been outstanding. Unfortunately, the ability to determine within hours the actual presence of POWs at Son Tay was lacking. Although KINGPIN produced no freed POWs, it demonstrated to the North Vietnamese that their homeland could be invaded, and produced a "major positive effect" on the morale of 70% of the POWs.70/

Meanwhile, back in the South, the Vietnamization program continued, as US forces turned over a greater share of the intelligence responsibility to the South Vietnamese. Particularly important was the transfer of SIGINT missions, although the Vietnamese continued to depend heavily on the Americans for SIGINT information and support.

By the early 1970s, South Vietnamese forces had paid dearly for their lack of attention to counterintelligence. The ARVN/US operation LAM SON 719, the incursion in the Tchepone area of central Laos in February 1971, was a near-disaster due to faulty security and other problems. The enemy was alerted to the operation months before the assault occurred, and was able to rehearse effective defenses and countermeasures. In addition, the ARVN had been thoroughly penetrated by enemy intelligence forces. Some US analysts believe that up to 30,000 South Vietnamese were working for Hanoi by this time.71/

A major intelligence topic of 1972 was the performance of allied intelligence before and after the major North Vietnamese assault of March 1972, the "Easter Offensive." The allies apparently had some advance warning of the attacks, for an agent had tipped off the South Vietnamese that the North had decided to take Saigon by May 19--the birthday of Ho Chi Minh. The GSV misjudged the axis of the attack however, which came directly across the DMZ. The South Vietnamese expected the enemy not to violate the Geneva accords, which forbade violation of the DMZ, and expected an attack from the West.72/ Furthermore, GVN intelligence miscalculated the timing and methods of the enemy's attack, and was surprised by the fact that enemy forces employed mostly heavy conventional weapons.

The US formed a perspective of the ARVN forces during the 1972 Easter Offensive (when the South Vietnamese performance proved acceptable)

which would endure; the inaccuracy of this assessment worked to the detriment of quality intelligence estimates. South Vietnamese success in 1972 was accomplished with the aid of US advisors, airpower, artillery, and a well-run US logistics system. Thus, the perception US intelligence gained was one of an efficient, aggressive ARVN which was able to defend its home territory. Even as late as 1974, when most US support was gone, some analysts in the USDAO (and possibly other intelligence elements as well) did not change their views of the ARVN. The collection charters that guided US agencies shaped the assessments each agency produced, but the USDAO had no charter to collect information against the allied ARVN forces. By contrast South Vietnamese (GVN) targets--both military and civilian--were fair game for the CIA Station; the CIA went beyond political socio-economic intelligence and gathered order of battle information and operational data on the RVNAF.

During this time, US intelligence remained obsessed with using numbers to show "success." By 1972, the CIA Station was producing some 500 reports a month, although a review of Station reporting uncovered over 100 "agents" who were found to be fabricators. This unfortunate "numbers game" spilled over to the South Vietnamese Unit 101, which produced about 1,500 reports a month; this overwhelmed the analysts, who were hard-pressed to evaluate the information and follow up leads. The USDAO performed under the same ground rules in 1973-74, when it averaged about 1,200 reports a month.<sup>73/</sup> (See Table 9-8 for an illustration of the size of the intelligence effort in the early 1970s.)<sup>74/</sup>

## 2. Linebacker I & II

The US achieved a major surprise in May 1972 with the resumption of bombing and the mining of the ports of North Vietnam--Operation Linebacker I (May-October 1972). Although President Nixon had warned the North Vietnamese of the possible consequences of their continued aggression in the South, Hanoi clearly miscalculated the US will and intention to resume strikes in the North. US success in the crushing air-to-ground campaign was due in part to the continuing efforts of the 432nd Tactical Reconnaissance Wing in Udorn, Thailand as well as SAC's Sk-71s (based in

TABLE 9-8. SOME ILLUSTRATIONS OF THE SIZE OF EFFORT IN EARLY 1970's.

THE EFFORT	
•	40,000 sensors associated with Igloo White in Laos by 1972
•	Average of over 2,000 aerial reconnaissance sorties per month over SVN until mid-1971 (460th TRW only)
•	500 reports/month from CIA Station (1972)
•	1,500 reports/month from GVN Unit 101 (1973-74)
•	1,200 reports/month from USDAO Saigon (1974)
•	Direct hire employees in early 70's:
	DAO - 3,800                      CORDS - 1,122
	State - 900                      AID - 924
	CIA - 1,900
•	Continuing SIGINT programs (fewer US, more South Vietnamese) in each MR.

SOURCE: Multiple Unclassified Sources, Listed in the Endnotes to this Chapter



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Okinawa), U-2s and Buffalo Hunter drones (based at Bien Hoa) which collectively photographed every major target in the DRV.

Linebacker II operations in December 1972 called for the swift, massive application of airpower (including B-52s) at the heart of North Vietnam. Although the North Vietnamese were stunned by the intensity of the bombing campaign, SAC's stereotyped tactics in the first few days of Linebacker II compromised the element of surprise to the North Vietnamese technical intelligence forces which supported the dense air defense system. Six B-52s were lost on the third day of the campaign, 15 in all. SAC adjusted these tactics as the campaign continued.

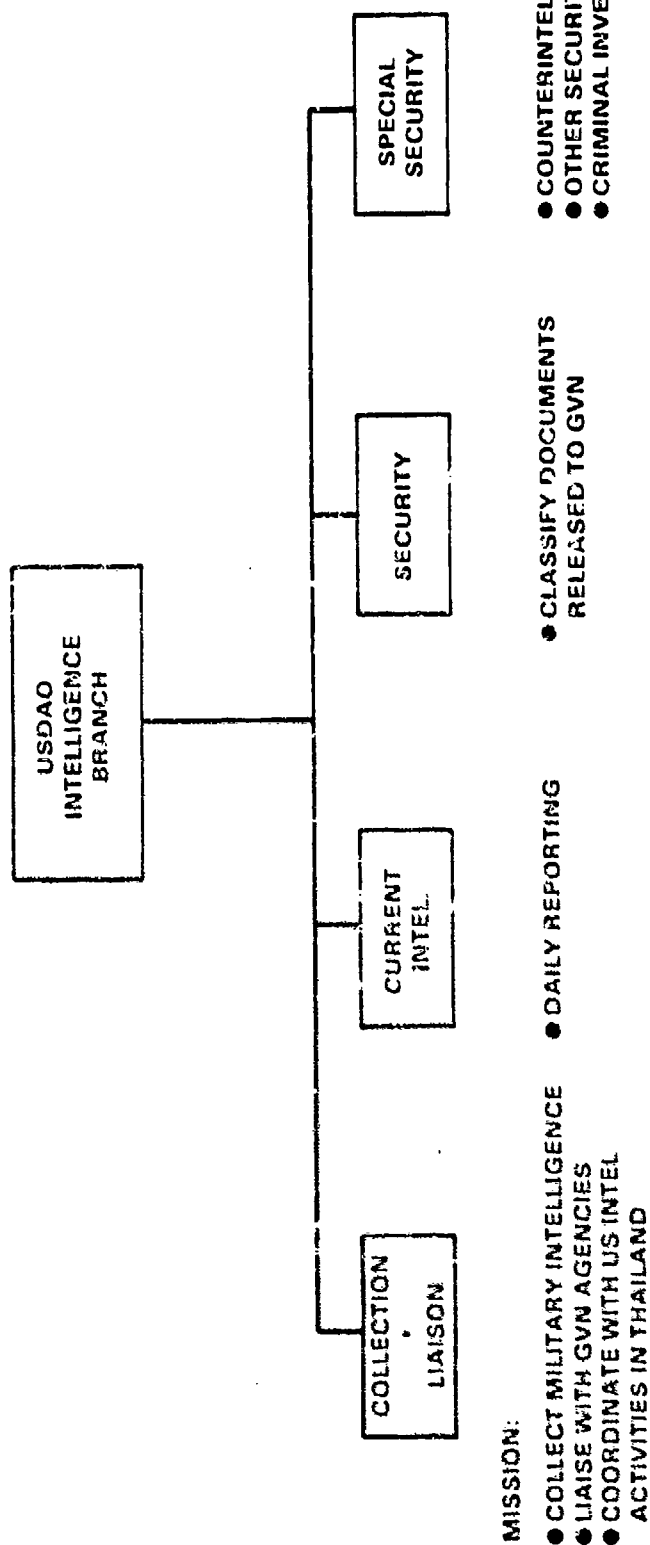
### F. FROM CEASEFIRE TO COLLAPSE (1973-75)

After the Paris Accord of January 1973, US military intelligence forces left the country, taking most of their equipment with them. This drastically reduced US field collection activities, since the need to support US combat troops was gone. The Defense Attache Office (USDAO) and the CIA Station--the two components of the Embassy having an intelligence mission--monitored the last phase of the war. Reports from both offices passed through the Ambassador's office.

#### 1. USDAO Saigon.

The mission of USDAO's Intelligence Branch was to collect, evaluate, and disseminate information on the NVA and VC in response to requirements levied by DIA, the US Army Support Activities Group in Thailand, CINCPAC, and other national intelligence agencies. Within USDAO, the office of collection and liaison performed human source collection of military intelligence, coordination with US intelligence activities in Thailand, and liaison and coordination with GVN agencies. (See Figure 9-9.)<sup>75/</sup> In 1974-75, this office was comprised of some 65 Americans and 200 Vietnamese, out of a total USDAO staff of about 1,250.

The USDAO apparently had considerable difficulty in adequately performing its mission.<sup>76/</sup> According to the former chief of its Collection



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SOURCE: GRC/OCMH, Monograph Intelligence, p. 131

Figure 9-9. Organization of Defense Attache Office, Saigon in 1973

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and Liaison Office, mission accomplishment was hampered by the quality of people performing collection, by the inadequate collection guidance levied by DIA and other agencies, and by a prohibition on collection of "political", "controversial", and "sensitive" information (such as criticism of Thieu or evidence of corruption). As a result, key reporting from USDAO about the state of the South Vietnamese did not reach decision makers in Washington. Ambassador Graham Martin insisted that DAO retain a network of agents to keep track of development in the ARVN, but this received little support from the Pentagon.

DIA, the primary consumer of USDAO reporting, allegedly "maintained great interest" in the status of South Vietnamese forces, although the evidence for this interest is sketchy. In 1973, DIA had one analyst dealing with friendly forces "on an almost fulltime basis". (A much larger analytical effort was directed toward enemy forces.) It was not until late 1974 that an official change was prepared in DIA's Manual 491, which defines that agency's responsibilities, establishing DIA's primacy in reporting on all forces in South Vietnam (the manual itself was published in May 1975, after the war ended). According to one account, DIA sought information on ARVN forces, but USDAO would report that this information was unavailable. DIA prepared intelligence collection requirements (ICRs) on ARVN forces, but most of these ICRs were not prepared until November and December 1974.77

SECTION 2 DELETED

### 3. 1974--Enemy Momentum Builds, Analysis Fragmented

In 1974, many captured documents and agent reports were obtained by Station and USDAO. This information indicated the general aims of the communists' strategy but usually pinpointed precise objectives. Neither the Embassy nor the GVN was fully prepared for what finally took place due to a lack of solid interpretation. According to one account, "no one seemed to agree on the implications of the available intelligence, and as time passed and more data piled up, divergent lines of analysis only multiplied."<sup>80</sup>/

In early 1974, the North Vietnamese were eager to probe the reactions of ARVN and those in Washington who still might support aid for the GVN. Accordingly, the VNA captured Phuoc Long Province, some 100 miles north of Saigon. The GVN hoped in vain that the province's fall would spur further congressional aid. But according to some long-time observers of the local scene such as Denis Warner, Saigon had cried "wolf" once too often; its inability and unwillingness to re-take Phuoc Long Province simply reinforced the views of those who believed the ARVN would not fight no matter what aid it received.

The Saigon Station and the USDAO tended to agree on the general character of enemy intentions in 1974--that the NVA/VC forces would key

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their battlefield initiatives to ambitious objectives. Intelligence analysts at USDAO had predicted a general offensive every month since the cease-fire of January 1973, according to one account. CIA analysts in Washington were among the "least alarmist" in a 1974 estimate for Vietnam, NIE 53/14-3-74, and predicted no significant enemy advances until 1976.81/ Both the Chief of Station and USDAO objected to this optimistic analysis. According to one account, both the CIA analysts in Washington and their kindred spirits in the Pentagon "would continue to err on the side of excessive optimism". President Thieu and the GVN continued to rely on Station estimates in preparing their own.82/

Unfortunately, Thieu's inner circle had been penetrated by North Vietnamese intelligence. According to former CIA analyst Frank Snepp, in December 1974, a highly placed agent reportedly sent Hanoi a "priceless" top secret report on GVN plans and preparations -- which included the allied assessment that the NVA/VC forces were incapable of pushing their campaign to a level like that of the 1968 Tet Offensive. Thus, the North Vietnamese apparently had full knowledge of what Thieu expected of them and could refine their plans to outmaneuver him.

Even without the hostile intelligence penetration, the South Vietnamese would have had their share of problems. Throughout 1974, the South Vietnamese had felt deeply the loss of US intelligence assets, and could not compensate for these losses themselves. By now, particular problems in SIGINT and aerial reconnaissance collection had emerged.83/

To assist their SIGINT collection effort, the GVN had acquired 30 EC-47 aircraft equipped for SIGINT collections. Due to maintenance problems, only about one-third of this number was operational at any one time.84/ Also, the ARVN technicians did not thoroughly absorb US-sponsored SIGINT training; few Vietnamese SIGINT technicians knew their jobs or took a professional approach to their work.

In the area of aerial reconnaissance, the Vietnamese could not begin to match the scope of the previous US effort, which had accounted for 90 per cent of all aerial reconnaissance in South Vietnam. The Vietnamese Air Force acquired some 12 RC-47s and six RF-5 jets from the US, but not the highly-regarded OV1 Mohawk which the US Army had employed.85/

Airborne SIGINT and photographic reconnaissance missions had become much more difficult to perform due to the rapidly expanding network of enemy air defenses in South Vietnam and along the Ho Chi Minh Trail in Laos. These defenses included the SA-2 and shoulder-fired SA-7 surface-to-air missiles (SAMs) and 37mm, 57mm, and 100mm antiaircraft artillery (AAA). In addition, enemy forces were well versed in the use of massed small arms fire for troop air defense. This philosophy of "everybody shoot" accounted for losses of numerous South Vietnamese aircraft and helicopters. As the combined NVA/VC air defense perimeter grew, reconnaissance aircraft reduced the range of their missions.<sup>86/</sup>

As 1974 ended, various indicators emerged which pointed to a record buildup of NVA capabilities. In December, Soviet General Viktor Kulikov, Chief of the General Staff, flew to Hanoi to participate in the Politburo's deliberations. The last time such a high-ranking Soviet officer visited the DRV was in late 1971. Analysts at CIA and the State Department assured the Station that the visit was routine.

#### 4. 1975--The Last Act

Nonetheless, Soviet sealoft of weapons to North Vietnam jumped fourfold following General Kulikov's visit, and Hanoi passed enough supplies into South Vietnam to sustain an all-out offensive. A joint CIA/DIA report of 5 March 1975 stated that "North Vietnamese forces in South Vietnam, supported by record stockpile of military supplies, are stronger today than they have ever been."<sup>87/</sup> The task of pinpointing the enemy's intentions, even at this late stage, remained as difficult as ever.

During this period, US and South Vietnamese intelligence forces were unaware that a major NVA buildup was occurring in the area of Ban Me Thuot. In February the 316th NVA Division marched from the DRV to that city in three weeks, employing radio silence all the way. Meanwhile, the South Vietnamese forces had lost track of the 10th and 320th NVA Divisions. The enemy had gained a 5-1 manpower advantage over the ARVN in this area, of which nobody in Saigon was aware. Analysts there had come to rely heavily on SIGINT, in lieu of human-source data, in fast-moving crisis situations. (The real problems of agent-to-case officer communications

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were intensified by the expanding scope of NVA operations, which cut critical LOCs.) Apparently, the enemy's effective COMSEC had been overlooked.88/

Both the USDAO and the Station assessment continued to focus on the areas of Kontum and Pleiku as possible locations of attack, and glossed over Ban Me Thuot altogether. Not until three days after the battle began there did Saigon planners realize that Ban Me Thuot had been lost.89/ By late March, the CIA published reports of the definite possibility of a decisive RVNAF defeat.90/

In March 1975, intelligence analysis was completely overtaken by events, as demonstrated by reporting on the enemy attack on Da Nang. On March 17, a CIA/State/DoD memorandum concluded that the NVA would bypass that city. When Da Nang was attacked shortly afterward, the CIA claimed on March 20 that the city would hold. On March 25, the assessment sent to President Ford stated that the GVN probably could not hold Da Nang. Special estimates on Vietnam were similarly jumbled. Former CIA analyst Frank Snepp described SNIE 53/14-3-75 as "ambiguous to the point of incomprehensibility", and it had all the telltale signs of countless revisions and analytical compromises.

By early April, the signs of a decisive South Vietnamese defeat were unmistakable, and for once all the analysts in Washington had a clear view of the realities. As USDAO and CIA Station officers began planning to evacuate the courageous South Vietnamese who had provided intelligence on the enemy, CIA Director Colby stated on April 2 that the balance of forces had shifted decisively to the enemy. The following day, an interagency intelligence memorandum declared: "We believe that in a matter of months, if not weeks, Saigon will collapse militarily or a government will be installed that will agree to a settlement on Communist terms."91/

The final evacuation of Saigon has some intelligence-related problems. The commanding officer of the 4th Marines, the ground component of the 4th MAB which largely implemented the evacuation, believes that it should have been executed three or four days before it occurred, in view of the rapidly deteriorating situation. This view parallels that of Frank

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Snepp, the CIA analyst in Saigon, who believed that Ambassador Graham Martin was caught dangerously off guard. After US forces withdrew from RVN in 1973, the existing US SIGINT data bank was managed by the South Vietnamese and it atrophied quickly. No effective data base existed in 1975 when the 4th MAB began to evacuate personnel from Saigon. The evacuation force was able to begin monitoring the PAVN artillery nets immediately, however, and to develop reasonably good intelligence concerning units and movements. Moreover, US forces were aware that the enemy had SA-7 shoulder-fired SAMs near Saigon, which could be used to down helicopters. Thus, flares were provided in order to decoy the heat-seeking missiles.<sup>92/</sup> (See Figure 9-10 for selected intelligence milestones.)

### G. THE ENEMY

#### 1. The Enemy's Intelligence

US Army MI forces and other agencies were pitted against a tenacious intelligence effort led by North Vietnam's Central Research Agency (CRA).<sup>93/</sup> The key differences between the CRA and the intelligence effort mounted by South Vietnam, summarized in Figure 9-11,<sup>94/</sup> account for many instances in which the enemy was apprised of US/GVN operations. This aspect of the "intelligence war" is fundamental to any understanding of events in Vietnam, for the enemy regarded intelligence as one of the major components of success or defeat. Not only did the North Vietnamese mount aggressive collection programs, but their security effort was usually able to mask the activities of their forces. (See Figure 9-12).<sup>95/</sup> Thus, US MI personnel had the difficult task of attempting to monitor the perimeter of an expanding fog.

The system of "people's intelligence" became the major input of information for enemy forces. People's intelligence networks ran from villagers through agent handlers (case officers) to Hanoi. Untold thousands of Vietnamese supplied bits of information on US/ARVN operations, and the enemy often knew of US/ARVN operations by the time they were launched.



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	HUMAN SOURCE	SIGINT	PHOTO RECONNAISSANCE	SENSORS	COVERT/ PARAMILITARY	ANALYSIS	INTEL POLICY
1961		USMC AND ASA TARGETS ON NVA-VC	EC-47, RF-33 RF-101, RF-38 OVER LAOS		CIA'S FARMHAND OPS AG. DRV USAF WHITE STAR OPS IN LAOS	GEN TAYLOR FINDS POOR REPORTING FROM EMS	JFR DE CISIONS IN MAY OCT
1962		USMC 1st RC AND ARMY ASA IN PLEIKU DESOTO PATROLS BEGIN	LOW ALT MENS BEGIN IN LAOS OV. 1 TO RVN				
1963			RYAN 147 DRONES OVER LAOS			McNAMARA FINDS POOR REPORTING FROM EMS	
1964		USS MADDOX WITH NSA COMNAVON ELINT MSN	U-2 OPS IN SEA BEGIN		OPPLAN 34A IN EFFECT	CIA ATTEMPTS TO IMPROVE REPORTING	
1965		INTERCEPT PRODUCT "FAIR" IN SVN	ARMY 73rd ASC DRG RF 4C TO SEA		OPERATION SHINING BRASS	COMBINED US GVN CENTERS ORG	
1966		ASA 3rd RRU REORG TO 503rd MAG	USAF 460th 432nd TRWS ORG	IGLOO WHITE IN APPROVED			CIA STA MACV OPPOSE INTEGRATION
1967	3 000 US MI PERSONNEL IN RVN	HIGH QUALITY SIGINT IN RVN		IN BEGINS OPERATION	PHOENIX PROGRAM BEGINS	CIA MACV ENEMY OS DISPUTE	DOMESTIC SURVEILLANCE BEGINS
1968	SEVERAL PRODUCTIVE CIA OPS IN ENEMY'S COMMAND	US PERFORMING 85% OF GROUND RDT 85% OF ARVN RDT	SR-71 MS-4S OVER DRV	SENSORS HELP USMC OFFENSE OF THE SANH			
1969	US CONGR INVESTIGATION RE ENEMY PENETRATIONS			SENSORS GET SPECTACULAR RESULTS IN FITE BASE CROSS OF		VCA OS SNAPU	REAL INTEL COOPERATION MACV AND GVN
1970	ESTIMATE OF ABOUT 30 000 ENEMY PENETRATIONS	NSA ASSUMES MSH OF COORD W J 7		PAVE SADE RVN IN SUPPORT OF IWC	OPERATION SINGHIN SON TAT RAID		MAJOR DIA REORG
1971		18 RU-36 SIGINT ACFT OEL TO SVN	480th TRW FAN SON NHUT DISBANCS	ARMY USES SENSORS IN CAMBODIA			INTEL COMMUNITY ACQUIS
1972	300 CIA REPORTS MO			40 000 SENSORS IN IN SETUP			
1973	1 000 USDAO APPROX MO		RYAN GETS 12-40-67 AND 6-6-68			GVN UNIT 300 FORMED FROM 4 COMBINED CENTERS	
1974	THREE INNER CIRCLE PENETRATED	RYAN OS FINDS 30 EC-47'S GINT ACFT	END OF RF-4C AND RF-38 OPS OVER LAOS			CIA STA USDAO AGREE ON NVA INTENTIONS	
1975		CIA STA VEDAO RELY ON SIGINT	VEDAO STATED THAT ABOUT 3 000 GVN MENS ELIMIN			WASHINGTON ANALYSTS AGREE FOR CLOSE TIME	

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SOURCE: BDM Analysis of Intelligence Documentation and Interview  
Notes Reflected in the Endnotes to This Chapter

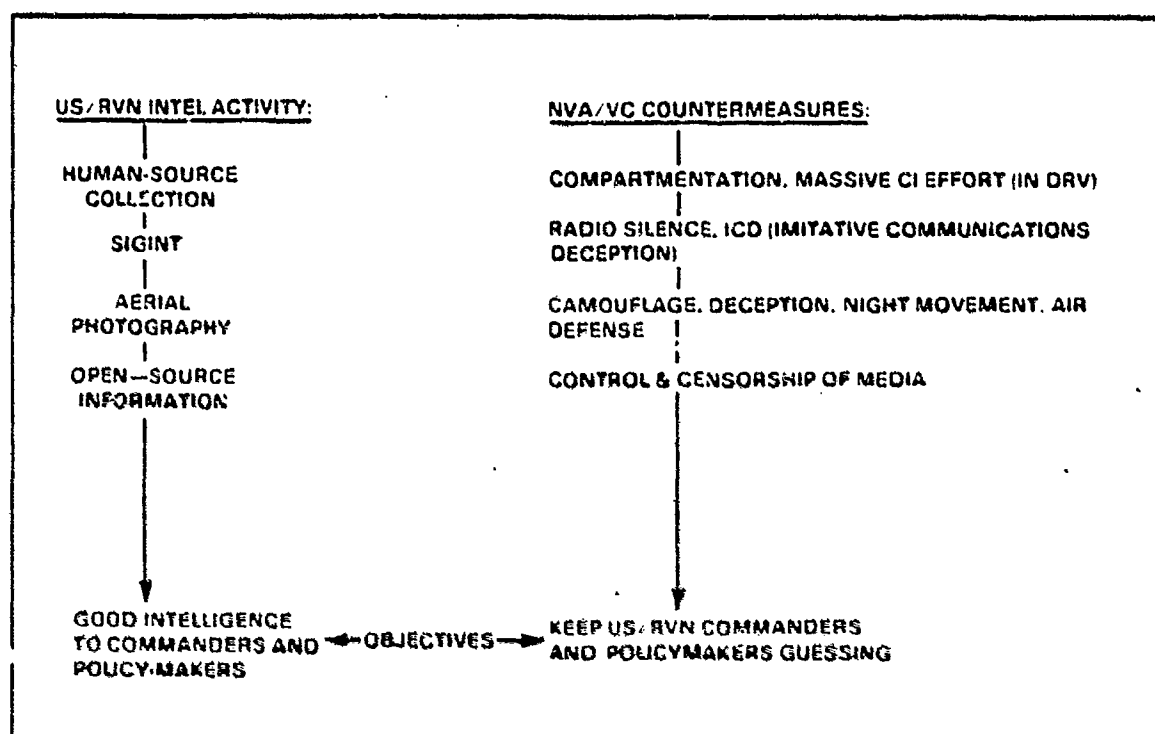
Figure 9-10. Selected Intelligence Milestones

<u>SOUTH VIETNAMESE</u>	<u>NORTH VIETNAMESE</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• NUMEROUS ORGANIZATIONS IN DIFFERENT COMMAND CHANNELS, LEADING TO REDUNDANCY, RIVALRY, DILUTION OF EFFORT.</li> <li>• DIFFICULT TO RECRUIT PRODUCTIVE AGENTS IN COUNTRYSIDE.</li> <li>• LITTLE EMPHASIS ON CI, EASY TO PENETRATE.</li> <li>• COLLECTION EFFORT GENERALLY LIMITED TO SVN TERRITORY.</li> <li>• INTELLIGENCE OFTEN MISUSED OR CONTRIVED TO SUIT COMMANDERS' WHIMS.</li> <li>• STRICT SEPARATION OF MILITARY AND POLITICAL INTELLIGENCE.</li> <li>• RELIED HEAVILY ON TECHNICAL INTELLIGENCE COLLECTION MEANS.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• UNIFIED SERVICE (CRA) UNDER DIRECT CONTROL OF POLITBURO</li> <li>• "PEOPLE'S INTELLIGENCE" A KEY TO OPERATIONS</li> <li>• HEAVY EMPHASIS ON CI AND SECURITY</li> <li>• DRV COLLECTED INTELLIGENCE WHEREVER THERE WERE N. VIETNAMESE TROOPS (INCLUDING LAOS AND CAMBODIA).</li> <li>• TOP LEADERSHIP DEMANDED ACCURATE INTELLIGENCE REPORTING.</li> <li>• MILITARY AND POLITICAL INTELLIGENCE REPORTING HIGHLY SYNTHESIZED, WHICH TOOK INTO ACCOUNT EVERY CONSIDERATION</li> <li>• MORE CONCERNED WITH LEARNING HOW US/ RVNAF TECHNICAL COLLECTION MEANS WORKED THAN DEVELOPING THEIR OWN TECHNICAL COLLECTION MEANS.</li> </ul>

SOURCE: BDM Analysis of Intelligence Documentation and Interview Notes Reflected in the Endnotes to This Chapter (Primarily Lung, Intelligence, Passim)

Figure 9-11. Key Differences Between South Vietnamese and North Vietnamese Intelligence Efforts

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SOURCE: BDM Analysis of Intelligence Documentation and Interview Notes Reflected in the Endnotes to This chapter

Figure 9-12. Action-Reaction of Intelligence Activities

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A Vietnamese source lucidly describes the theory of people's intelligence:

Fundamentally, peoples intelligence means that every citizen participates in intelligence in order to safeguard his (or her) own welfare and the welfare of his family and community. The basic objective to be achieved in peoples intelligence is to know everything that can be known about the enemy while concealing from him and denying him knowledge about us. The Communists usually likened the enemy to an actor performing on stage under floodlights before an audience. His every gesture, every utterance can be perceived by hundreds of eyes and ears, yet he cannot make out anyone from the audience who, like the people, blend themselves with the dark background. 96/

The quality of people's intelligence was probably more effective in theory than in practice. It is uncertain, for example, that many villagers were adequately trained to observe and report on allied equipment or units. Moreover, the application of people's intelligence was hampered by the passive, resilient nature of Vietnamese peasants and their aversion to authority.

The successes of enemy intelligence were due in large measure to the allies' unprofessional security methods. American and ARVN units' COMSEC was generally poor throughout the war; this led to frequent compromises of US/ARVN plans.

The enemy imposed rigid censorship on his own press in the DRV and exploited the South's lack of military censorship. A reader could obtain vital information from Saigon papers with relative ease. The defense budget committees of the GVN's National Assembly often held question-and-answer sessions with Ministry of Defense representatives, which led to numerous compromises about Saigon's defense programs. Generally, the GVN would only censor controversial information on internal politics.

The enemy's technical intelligence collection effort expanded considerably after 1965. Under COSVN, the enemy formed "technical reconnaissance sections." These units intercepted US/ARVN radio communications, 97/ jammed allied radio systems, and conducted imitative communications deception (ICD). The NVA/VC forces would imitate Americans on radio nets, for example, and would confuse US/ARVN artillery units by ordering "don't shoot, we're friendly" in English.98/ Moreover, the enemy was equipped with the allies' radios, such as the AN/PRC-6, AN/PRC-10, AN/PRC-25 and others. According to a Vietnamese source, the successful NVA capture of Ban Me Thuot in February 1975 was aided by the successful deception practiced by the 320th NVA Division; the division left its command radio stations behind as it slipped out to attack the city, and the ARVN lost track of the division.

The NVA repeatedly overcame US technical collection efforts, often with astonishingly simple solutions. Aware that the US relied heavily on airborne direction-finding (DF) "fixes," the enemy would employ a simple technique called "remoting." He would establish his radio transmitter in one place, his headquarters some distance away, and connect the two entities with messengers or wire. Thus, the USAF bombed hundreds, possibly thousands, of antennas without greatly damaging enemy forces. In another often-cited example, enemy forces on the Ho Chi Minh Trail would often spoof US "people-sniffers" by hanging bags of urine alongside the sensor. Throughout the conflict, CRA intelligence officers were usually more concerned at learning how US technical collection techniques operated than trying to employ these techniques themselves.99/

## 2. Our Counterintelligence (CI)

American forces were the major focus of the enemy intelligence effort, but the MACV counterintelligence (CI) resources were quite limited in 1965. The 704th Intelligence Corps Detachment provided CI support to the command and advised the GVN's Military Security Service (MSS). This was the extent of the American military's CI capability. In December 1965, Company B of the 519th Military Intelligence Battalion arrived in Vietnam and absorbed the mission, personnel, and equipment of the 704th. In

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December 1966, the 135th Military Intelligence Group assimilated Company B of the 519th and assumed the CI mission for MACV. 100/

American CI teams deployed to each province. Often collocated with local MSS teams, American teams regularly participated in combined operations. Close cooperation was essential to these operations, for the US units lacked Vietnamese linguists and US CI agents could not blend inconspicuously with the Vietnamese.

These joint US/ARVN operations presented US CI forces with some unique problems in view of the hostile intelligence effort to penetrate the MSS. In this way, access agents could become apprised of US intelligence sources and methods. The exact level of penetration of the MSS can only be guessed, but former CIA analyst Frank Snapp suggests that a high-ranking MSS official was on Hanoi's payroll. 101/

The MSS and National Police were both penetrated, and the South Vietnamese generally placed little emphasis on CI, believing it to be outside the scope of MI functions. The MSS remained focused on domestic political reporting, and did not concentrate on a much tougher target -- the VCI.

The extensive American use of local Vietnamese in service functions made US facilities vulnerable to penetration and presented a serious challenge to the entire US CI program. The US required that Vietnamese full-time employees receive a favorable personnel security investigation from the MSS, but the MSS did not have the resources to investigate all the day laborers who worked at US installations. The MSS had a total of 4,328 employees in 1965. 102/

### H. STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES 103/

In this section an analysis of intelligence strengths and weaknesses will be undertaken. This serves a more constructive purpose than the mere labelling of events as either "intelligence successes" or "intelligence failures." It also allows for a more accurate assessment; the division of events into "success" and "failure" columns overlooks or distorts the

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ambiguity and the varying shades of success or failure that existed in reality. Further, definitions of success or failure often depend on too-personal assessments of goals and their attainment, which can be overly influenced by hindsight wisdom. Disagreements over the performance of US intelligence just prior to the Tet offensive illustrate the pitfalls of a success-or-failure analysis.

The following analysis, then, is offered in the spirit of constructive criticism, with hope that military intelligence forces can profit from these observations. It should be remembered that if this project were expanded to include classified information, more US successes could be included. Moreover, intelligence inadequacies, by their very nature, are easier to diagnose and are more obvious than the smooth operation of an adequate system. When intelligence assets performs correctly, commanders and policy makers sometimes take this performance for granted, so that when problems arise a disproportionately negative picture of intelligence operations often results.

### 1. US Strengths

American military intelligence forces had some successes during the Vietman conflict in the face of a determined foe and difficult operating conditions.

- The US mounted a highly sophisticated technical collection effort which reached unprecedented success in finding the enemy, particularly during the late 1960s. Representative of these technical advances are the Army's array of ground sensors, the OV-1 Mohawk aerial reconnaissance platform, and the ASA and other SIGINT units in Vietman.
- US forces displayed a knack for improvising collection techniques in the field which proved effective in many cases. The development of techniques for hand-held photography by forward air controllers (FACs) is one example. US military intelligence forces developed many other techniques as well.
- Beginning in 1965, the US photographic reconnaissance effort over the DRV and Laos resulted in high-quality intelligence upon which

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policymakers and top commanders came to rely. Primary responsibility for this effort is owed to the 432nd Tactical Reconnaissance Wing and the SAC force of Buffalo Hunter drones, U-2s, and SR-71s. 104/

- The US effectively used enemy documents, which stated the NVA/VC objectives and methods of operation. Documents were vital, for example, in determining the extent to which the enemy used the Cambodian port of Sihanoukville to support his logistic effort.
- The general track record of some analysts was consistently sound in reporting the real obstacles that lay in the path of American objectives in Vietnam. Unfortunately, the analytical community was not united in its assessments.
- The American military intelligence displayed a fairly good capability to exploit the information obtained through prisoners, ralliers, or deserters from the enemy side. This information was employed to help determine the enemy force structure and other key information.
- Some innovative ideas emerged during the course of the war, such as the Innocent Civilian Centers. According to one account, these centers offered a welcome respite for villagers who resided in VC based areas, and gave the Americans a chance to collect information from the villagers; this helped to offset the gains the enemy had made with his "people's intelligence" technique.
- The dissemination of intelligence information upward through the chain of command was uniformly good; untold thousands of letters, maps, and documents were forwarded by field commanders to MACV Intelligence, which should have given MACV Headquarters analysts a good "feel" for the war in the countryside.
- Positive action by USG intelligence personnel in preventing ARVN mistreatment of enemy prisoners is praiseworthy. This was important in preventing unpleasant "media events" and often paid off in the form of positive intelligence from the captives (who often expected harsh abuses or torture).



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### 2. US Weaknesses

The weaknesses of the American military intelligence system in support of the war effort outnumbered the strong points. This was due to a combination of factors (including the nature of intelligence operations in that theater, character of enemy and friendly forces, etc.).

- The United States lacked a cohesive, coordinated intelligence effort throughout the war. Although many different US intelligence groups operated in Vietnam, there was never a free exchange of information between them. Neither did top policymakers demand such an effort. This shortcoming began early on and accounted for numerous problems in the entire allied intelligence effort. This shortcoming increased as US involvement in Vietnam deepened.
- Security of American and ARVN field operations was poor, both in terms of operations security (OPSEC) and communications security (COMSEC). As a result, the enemy generally was apprised of the major allied "search and destroy" missions. Poor security gave an added bonus to the NVA/VC "people's intelligence" effort.
- Top American commanders did not understand the issues and complexities of the intelligence effort, particularly in the critical years of 1965-67, and because of inadequate guidance to intelligence elements, failed to obtain a grasp of the enemy's total capabilities. The result was that top policymakers misunderstood and underestimated the enemy throughout most phases of the war. "Vietnam realities" became readily apparent to those who were closest to the enemy in the field. (See Table 9-9 for the relationship between military incompetence and faulty information from MI services. It is important to examine the close relationship between the two factors.)<sup>105/</sup>
- The American infatuation with numbers to "keep score" was harmful to the overall intelligence effort, and has been labeled as "one of the more trying experiences" by one top official. Nobody had much faith in the numbers, which could be inflated or otherwise tampered with.

TABLE 9-9. CHARACTERISTICS OF MILITARY INCOMPETENCE

Many commanders and intelligence professionals agree that good information on enemy forces is necessary to success on the battlefield. Incompetence in battle is closely related to faulty MI, and the following are characteristics of incompetence, some of which occurred in Vietnam:

1. A serious wastage of human resources and failure to observe one of the first principles of war--economy of force.
- \*2. A fundamental conservatism and clinging to outworn tradition, an inability to profit from past experience (owing in part to refusal to admit past mistakes).
- \*3. A tendency to reject or ignore information which is unpalatable or which conflicts with preconceptions.
- \*4. A tendency to underestimate the enemy and overestimate the capabilities of one's own side.
5. Indecisiveness and a tendency to abdicate from the role of decision-makers.
- \*6. An obstinate persistence in a given task despite strong contrary evidence.
7. A failure to exploit a situation gained and a tendency to "pull punches" rather than push home an attack.
- \*8. A failure to make adequate reconnaissance.
9. A predilection for frontal assaults, often against the enemy's strongest point.
- \*10. A belief in brute force rather than the clever ruse.
- \*11. A failure to make use of surprise or deception.
12. An undue readiness to find scapegoats for military setbacks.
- \*13. A suppression or distortion of news from the front, usually rationalized as necessary for morale or security.
14. A belief in mystical forces--fate, bad luck, etc.

\*Related to MI topics

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- The potential of computers in intelligence work was never properly exploited. The problem was that US forces in RVN were late in getting computers and had few people who could program them; therefore, it was in the later stages of the war before any value was reaped from the computers.
- Many US specialists generally underestimated the enemy and his "primitive" methods. For example, American military intelligence personnel generally lacked an appreciation of the enemy's capability to overcome the US technical collection effort, often with simple countermeasures.
- The US Army was slow to respond to the need for trained intelligence personnel in the theater to accompany the introduction of combat troops. If anything, there should have been a trained cadre of Army intelligence personnel there before the introduction of combat troops. It was not until 1967 before trained intelligence personnel were available to General Westmoreland in sufficient numbers. A long lead time was needed to recruit and train intelligence personnel.
- Collection management was faulty and badly organized, according to several accounts. As a result, intelligence operations lacked coordination with one another and analysts were burdened with ever-increasing volumes of worthless or marginal information. This appeared to be a common failing of intelligence officials in Washington, MACV, the USDAO, and the CIA Station, and spread to the Vietnamese units as well. Moreover, there was a large-scale duplication of effort between US elements of CICV and MACV's J-2.
- MACV was unable to produce coordinated intelligence under pressure of short deadlines. This was due to unnecessary compartmentalization and because production elements were scattered around the Saigon area with no secure telephone links. This shortcoming is, in retrospect, not only a failure of intelligence, but a failure of command elements.

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- The US intelligence forces lacked a clear understanding of the enemy's leadership, despite the fact that most of these leaders had been active for several years before US combat troops were committed. As a result, US intelligence was unable to report clearly the strategic goals and direction of this leadership. Similarly, US MI personnel generally did not appreciate political realities, even though the war itself was influenced greatly by Vietnamese political factors.
- The allied intelligence effort lacked understanding of the VCI (Viet Cong Infrastructure), particularly from the early 1950s to about 1968. As one major result, US forces lacked a keen appreciation of the subtleties of political warfare as practiced by the enemy.
- The US generally lacked a thorough knowledge of the enemy's complex logistics system, which was critical to the maintenance of his war effort. Some analysts understood the complexities of the Ho Chi Minh Trail system well, but were unable to convey to policy makers the critical importance of this system so that both out-of-country and in-country military actions could be directed against it. Likewise, there was a lack of feeling for the amounts of ammunition and rations needed to sustain enemy units of a certain size for a certain period of time.
- There was no cohesive, coordinated effort to define the size of the enemy force, a fact which led to shrill disputes over the enemy OB in 1967. Likewise, US ignorance of the size of the Cambodian Khmer Communist Army (KCA) was even more pronounced.
- MACV's preoccupation with viewing the OB in classic military terms prevented the command from assessing the enemy in the context of a much broader people's war, in which the enemy mobilized civilians to assist his efforts. As a result, MACV apparently underestimated enemy strength at a crucial stage. MACV stated that the strength of the NVA/VC regulars in South Vietnam had peaked in late 1966 at 127,000 and had declined slightly to

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118,000 in November 1967.<sup>106/</sup> (Other analysts, however, believed enemy strength to be much larger by late 1967.) Thus, US forces were surprised by the massive scale of the enemy's offensive during Tet in early 1968.

- The Army has never considered MI to be one of the "glamor" specialties, as the influx of untrained and unprofessional MI personnel during the crucial 1965-66 period illustrated. The American command in Vietnam was often saddled with MI specialists of marginal quality, many of whom could be spared from "more important" duties in Headquarters, DA or in Europe.
- Human-source intelligence collectors frequently played the "numbers game" and recruited large numbers of marginal sources who often failed to provide useful information. Also, the human-source collectors frequently demonstrated unprofessional tradecraft and tended to cut corners. This occurred both in South Vietnam and in the United States, where the lack of sound tradecraft was apparent to the many students who were monitored by MI units during the late 1960s.
- The US had continuing problems in attempting to define enemy intentions in Vietnam, specifically where he might attack next. To this end, an automated methodology of "pattern analysis" was first used successfully only in 1967 operations.<sup>107/</sup>
- The US intelligence collectors were bound by the "rules" of collection, formulated in Washington, which prevented the assembly of a thorough, comprehensive picture of the enemy. For example, MI units generally were prevented from collecting OB information about enemy forces in sanctuary areas in Laos and Cambodia.<sup>109/</sup> The enemy did not similarly constrain his activities as enemy planners treated Indochina simply as one large theater.

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Figure 9-13. DELETED

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- "Intelligence to please" was a continuing problem. This was primarily practiced by the South Vietnamese, but occasionally intelligence was geared to suit the whims of US commanders as well. This problem extended from everyday field operations to Washington (where top policymakers pressed for "favorable" assessments of the situation from the Intelligence Community, according to comments made available to the Pike Committee).<sup>110/</sup>
- Intelligence estimates of the actual situation in Vietnam were greatly influenced by inter-service rivalry. One reliable source has noted that the JCS was usually divided on the effects of the bombing effort against infiltration in North Vietnam and Laos with the USAF and USMC in favor of the effort, the Army skeptical, and the Navy giving reluctant support. Estimates of the bombing were replete with footnotes indicating dissents from the analytical mainstream and presented a jumbled picture to top decisionmakers.
- SIGINT remained a mystery for many US field commanders due to over-compartmentalization. The evaluation of SIGINT reports was based largely in the US and much of the data went out of Vietnam before getting the analytical treatment and applications it should have received. Specifically the evaluation of SIGINT in the US did not satisfy the combat commanders' requirements for tactical intelligence due to its lack of direct relationship to the tactical situations at hand, timeliness and details. Few commanders and staff personnel had the necessary clearances, and the SSD system proved unwieldy during the course of the war. Moreover, the SIGINT community often failed to recognize that its product was for the benefit of field commanders, and the "rules" dictated that the local G-2 often had to obscure the actual source of the SIGINT information. (By contrast, the Israeli SIGINT effort has long been aimed at providing immediate support to field commanders with a minimum of red tape.) Overall SIGINT support could have been enhanced many fold if a broad analytic

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SIGINT effort in direct support of the field commander had evolved with the build-up of combat forces. (The Services had the capability to perform this SIGINT analysis but were denied its implementation.)

- The US was particularly dependent on unreliable sources of information during the very early periods of American interest in Indochina. First the US relied on French sources, then on Vietnamese sources--both of which could be and often were misleading. In effect, US policymakers often viewed events in Vietnam through a narrow and often cloudy window, and failed to recognize the sweeping political and military changes which were underway during the late 1950s and early 1960s.
- Later on, the "charters" for MI collection began to stand in the way of getting the job done. (This is apparent in the case of the late DIA involvement in covering ARVN forces.) Intelligence organizations would frequently claim that "we have no charter to do this", when often these key subjects required thorough coverage. An underlying reason for this phenomenon is the bureaucratic rationale that expansion of an organization's charter would entail more work and require the commitment of more resources than had previously existed.
- There was little appreciation for the effects of outside political events on the war. This particularly applied to the effects of the Sino-Soviet split (which had been developing since the very early 1960s or possibly even before) and the Chinese Cultural Revolution (1966-69), when the Chinese were thoroughly absorbed in internal affairs. At the time, many in Washington believed that China would come to the aid of the DRV if the US or GVN forces invaded the North.
- Few US analysts had a good feel for Vietnamese history or culture. Fewer still spoke Vietnamese, which remained a key drawback to a professional intelligence effort. Thus, many American intelligence personnel (including those in MACV, USDAO, and the



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CIA Station) failed to view the war from a Vietnamese perspective. Moreover, the short one-year tours prevented the development of such a perspective.

- As a rule, the Intelligence Community lacked a complete picture of the enemy's vulnerabilities, and was thus unable to exploit them. Likewise, there was little appreciation for how the enemy's capabilities had changed over time. These changes continued to bring new vulnerabilities (morale, dependence on outside support, etc.) which could have been exploited.
- American training of South Vietnamese intelligence forces left a great deal to be desired, according to both Vietnamese and American sources. This was particularly important in fields of sophisticated technical collection.
- From time to time, various intelligence agencies were reluctant to accept new findings. For example, CIA analysts were slow to recognize the changing pattern of the enemy's logistics system (with the dependence on the port of Sihanoukville). Similarly, DIA and the military agencies were reluctant to accept changes in the enemy OB.
- American MI personnel and commanders did not set into motion a genuinely effective counterintelligence (CI) program, particularly during the crucial years of 1965-66. This shortcoming made it possible for enemy intelligence officers to operate in SVN with relative ease. In this respect, the US had to depend on the inefficient GVN CI and police organizations, at least in part.
- Dissemination of intelligence downward from MACV to the field commanders was poor. Some who served in command positions note that the upward flow of intelligence to MACV was thorough, but that MACV furnished little useful information back down the chain to field commanders.
- The MI community had little knowledge of the ARVN's ability to use its military capabilities. This fact is related to the "charter problem," recounted earlier in this subsection, but an

unbiased picture of ARVN's true capabilities was essential to the understanding of the war effort.

- Human-source intelligence from the field was slow in transmission. This was primarily due to two factors: generally unavoidable delays between the source's (agent's) access to the information and transmission of the information to the case officer, and often-avoidable delays in the case officer transmission of this information to the analyst. This problem is related to the collection tasking shortcoming, mentioned earlier. The analysis (frequently overwhelmed with great quantities of marginal human-source reporting) did not tell the case officers, "This subject is critical to the analytical effort, so report it immediately."
- Intelligence weaknesses in support of the Vietnamese war effort can be summarized as:
  - Failure to recognize that the various levels of staff intelligence directors were managers and not analysts.
  - Failure to recognize that the purpose of intelligence collection, analysis and reporting was to support the commander.
  - Failure to recognize that the intelligence product was an integrated, three-discipline report developed by a directed and determined interaction among these disciplines during all phases of the intelligence cycle.
  - Failure to establish a dissemination procedure which would meet the commanders' needs of content and timeliness.
  - Failure to integrate the intelligence effort of the Services and agencies with that of the tactical combat commanders and policy makers into a cohesive effort.

3. Enemy Strengths

The NVA/VC intelligence forces had many successes against their counterparts in the South Vietnamese intelligence services and against US

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intelligence as well. These successes were due both to US/GVN shortcomings, noted earlier in this chapter, and the strengths of the NVA/VC intelligence effort, listed below:

- The enemy, throughout his long history of warfare against foreign forces, had developed and refined the concept of cover and deception to a very high degree. The essence of cover and deception is the attempt to strike at the enemy commander's mind and to maintain ultimate economy of force, defeating the enemy's battle plan without necessarily engaging his forces in combat. Specifically, the enemy used a wide array of radio deception techniques, dummy air defense sites in the North, disinformation, and other techniques throughout the war. The enemy quickly learned of US and GVN intelligence sources and methods and was quick to counter them. In this respect, the enemy made widespread use of night operations.
- The enemy tailored his intelligence effort to the realities of the war. The enemy recognized the compelling need for a thorough, well-coordinated intelligence system to off-set superior US strength. The enemy steadily gained the support of the people (by persuasion and coercion) and, by the early 1960s was winning the guerrilla war. Local support accounted for the repeated success of his intelligence forces. Indeed, a retrospective look at the progress of the guerrilla war in the countryside gives one indication of the number of enemy cadres.
- The enemy effort to penetrate South Vietnamese security forces paid large dividends. South Vietnamese officials working for Hanoi were often able to supply key information on US and GVN defense forces and intentions. Other South Vietnamese recruited by the VC were placed in key counterintelligence positions, and helped to offset US and GVN counterintelligence programs directed against the enemy. According to one account, the South Vietnamese National Police was thoroughly penetrated, particularly in the northern provinces of South Vietnam. The Military Security

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Service (with which US CI forces enjoyed a close relationship) was also heavily penetrated, possibly at the uppermost levels. An in-house CIA estimate of 30,000 GVN/ARVN penetrations by the enemy should not be ignored, even though US officials apparently were once reluctant to face this possibility because of its implications for success of the Vietnamization Program.<sup>111/</sup>

- Significantly, North Vietnam mounted a unified, cohesive intelligence effort. Thus, the DRV was spared the time-consuming and often fruitless coordination which was required of US and GNV intelligence forces. Moreover, the goals of the North's intelligence program apparently did not change greatly over time.
- The DRV remained a most difficult target for US and GSV intelligence forces, in effect a "denied area". The DRV was very much a police state, with police-state controls similar to those found in other communist countries. This sharply reduced the prospects for success of sensitive human-source collection efforts based in that country. By contrast, South Vietnam was "wide open" for North Vietnamese CRA agents.
- Enemy personnel operating in the South stressed compartmentalization and security. They employed various types of controls on their personnel in the South, which tended to frustrate US/GVN efforts to penetrate communist cells or forces.
- The North Vietnamese war effort was led by commanders who understood intelligence issues and the corresponding political battle. Thus, the enemy stressed synthesized reporting, featuring military and political subjects.
- The North Vietnamese intelligence effort was not bound by the so-called "rules" under which US forces operated. Thus enemy intelligence forces (with some cadres who had operated in SVN for years) were free to employ whatever methods they could to collect information, however brutal or unsavory those methods might have to be.

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### 4. Enemy Weaknesses

NVA/VC intelligence was not without its drawbacks. At this unclassified level, the full range of the enemy's sources and methods cannot be reported, but those who are familiar with the NVA/VC effort point out that they had weaknesses as well as strong points in the intelligence field. Some of these problems are listed below:

- The people's intelligence system, on which the enemy relied heavily, often lacked trained observers. The enemy apparently made up for this shortcoming by employing large numbers of villagers to report on US/ARVN operations.
- Enemy forces occasionally displayed a lack of compartmentalization. Enemy commanders had to let their men know what was going on. Thus, some documents became available to US intelligence which proved valuable.
- The enemy was occasionally surprised by the unpredictability of US political leadership. This was made apparent by his surprise during the Linebacker I operations of early 1972, when Hanoi miscalculated the American leadership's will to resume the bombing campaign over the North. The enemy apparently lacked a comprehensive ability to anticipate key national-level decisions in Washington.
- Apparently, a significant proportion of enemy intelligence sources in South Vietnam were recruited under duress. The overall effectiveness of recruiting via blackmail or other stressful techniques--in terms of quality of reports--has long been questioned by intelligence professionals. Such efforts often result in unproductive agents who give just enough information to "get by". Again, it is likely that the enemy made up in number of sources what he lacked in individual quality of agents.

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## I. SUMMARY ANALYSIS AND INSIGHTS

The initial absence and subsequent inadequacy of US intelligence assets in Southeast Asia during the critical advisory period (1950-1965) and overdependence on the host nation for information made it virtually impossible for US decision makers to get a realistic appraisal of the insurgency potential and political and social ferment in South Vietnam or the preoccupation of the DRV with "land reform" (population control) in the North. Lacking such essential information, the advice and support given by the USG to the GVN was based on faulty analysis and was therefore inadequate to meet the real political and insurgent threats, resulting in the near collapse of the GVN and RVNAF in 1965. This intelligence failure contributed significantly to the USG's commitment of ground combat forces in RVN.

Among senior officers and within the intelligence community, there appears to have been a lamentable lack of familiarity with the enemy's doctrine, organization, strategy, and tactics coupled with a related failure by most to read and understand the writings of Mao, Ho, Giap, and others or to try to learn from the French experience against the same enemy. Those who did understand the enemy apparently were unable to articulate their concern or knowledge at high levels within DOD and the administration. Had a better understanding of the enemy's modus operandi existed, the VCI would have been an early priority intelligence target. Since the infrastructure was not targeted early enough, it was able to become entrenched and to foment insurgency with marked efficiency.

Concentration in the Reserve Component of substantial numbers of personnel with various intelligence MOSs left the active military forces with insufficient deployable intelligence specialists in 1965, and that critical shortcoming resulted in an intelligence product that was considerably lower in quality than it might otherwise have been. (Failure to mobilize hurt the Army and Marine Corps across the board, not simply in the intelligence field).

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The one-year US tour of duty in RVN inhibited the intelligence function and deprived analysts from gaining and using the expertise that comes with time on the job.

Excessive reliance on SIGINT by the US and ARVN made them susceptible to communications deception; ARVN's poor OPSEC/COMSEC often alerted the enemy and resulted in heavy casualties and tactical failure -- such as in LAM SON 719 (1971). US COMSEC was also generally very poor.

The communist enemy in Southeast Asia appreciated intelligence as a major component of success or failure and therefore employed every intelligence mechanism available to him, including people's intelligence, while simultaneously practicing generally excellent COMSEC.

Perhaps the best example of coordinated, top-level, all-source operational intelligence was Operation KINGPIN at Son Tay. All of the data needed to execute that raid with a high (95%) chance for tactical success without casualties was obtained because of the level of interest (President Nixon, Dr. Kissinger, Secretary of Defense Laird, and Chairman of the Joint Chief of Staff Admiral Moorer), thus assuring priority acquisition and full cooperation by all federal agencies. Execution was virtually flawless. Failure to free any US POWs was not an intelligence failure (it was recognized at the time of launch that there was a strong likelihood that the POWs had been transferred); rather it is an illustration of the difficulty in obtaining and acting on time-sensitive, perishable information.

NSA's insistence on conducting SIGINT analysis in CONUS often delayed the availability of important data beyond the point where it would have been useful. Further, analysts in CONUS could not be expected to know and appreciate the tactical commanders' requirements nor could they have access to local collateral information that would help in the analytical process.

The US and GVN failed to provide for or use effectively skilled stay-behind agents in and after 1954. This type of operation requires early planning, training, and indoctrination plus careful preparation. Conversely, the DRV anticipated, planned for, and implemented an effective stay-behind program which, in the early 1960s, nearly toppled the GVN and which provided valuable HUMINT and other services throughout the war.

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US and GVN intelligence apparatus focused too much on main force units and not enough on the VCI and local guerrillas until very late in the game. Further, the focus on enemy "capabilities", not balanced by analysis of his "intentions", helped to lead to such major surprises as Tet '68, Lanson 719 (1971), the Easter offensive (1972), and the Final Offensive (1975).

With some exceptions, order of battle intelligence on PLAF and PAVN main force units was good to excellent throughout US involvement in the war; as a result the enemy was generally unable to mass and seriously threaten large US units.

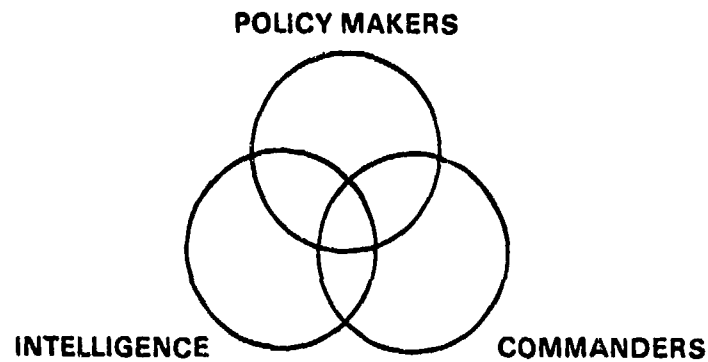
Despite the many positive aspects of US intelligence operations in Indochina (SIGINT, PHOTINT, HUMINT acquisition and analysis) there is need for a more cohesive effort between intelligence personnel, commanders, and policy makers and between the Service components and intelligence establishments. (See Figure 9-14)

### J. LESSONS

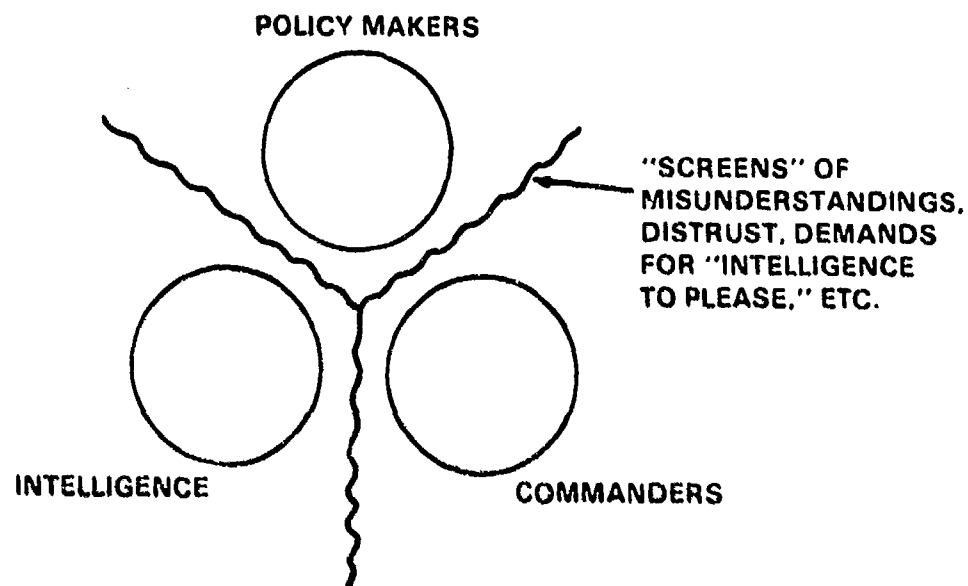
- A truly integrated intelligence effort, comprising all sources of information, is essential to the success of any intelligence effort. Moreover, an all-source effort is required for analysts to select the best sources for a given task (See Figure (9-15) and to screen out enemy attempts at cover, deception, or disinformation.
- To support an in-theater intelligence effort, an all-source intelligence center, including SIGINT, should be established under the theater commander (unified, subunified or combined) in country or nearby to fuse the collected information. Analysts at this center would require access to the same highly sensitive information which the senior intelligence analysts in Washington would have.
- Unit commanders and their staffs at brigade and possibly battalion level should be cleared for SIGINT and should receive direct SIGINT support during combat operations to optimize tactical operations and fully exploit all-source intelligence.



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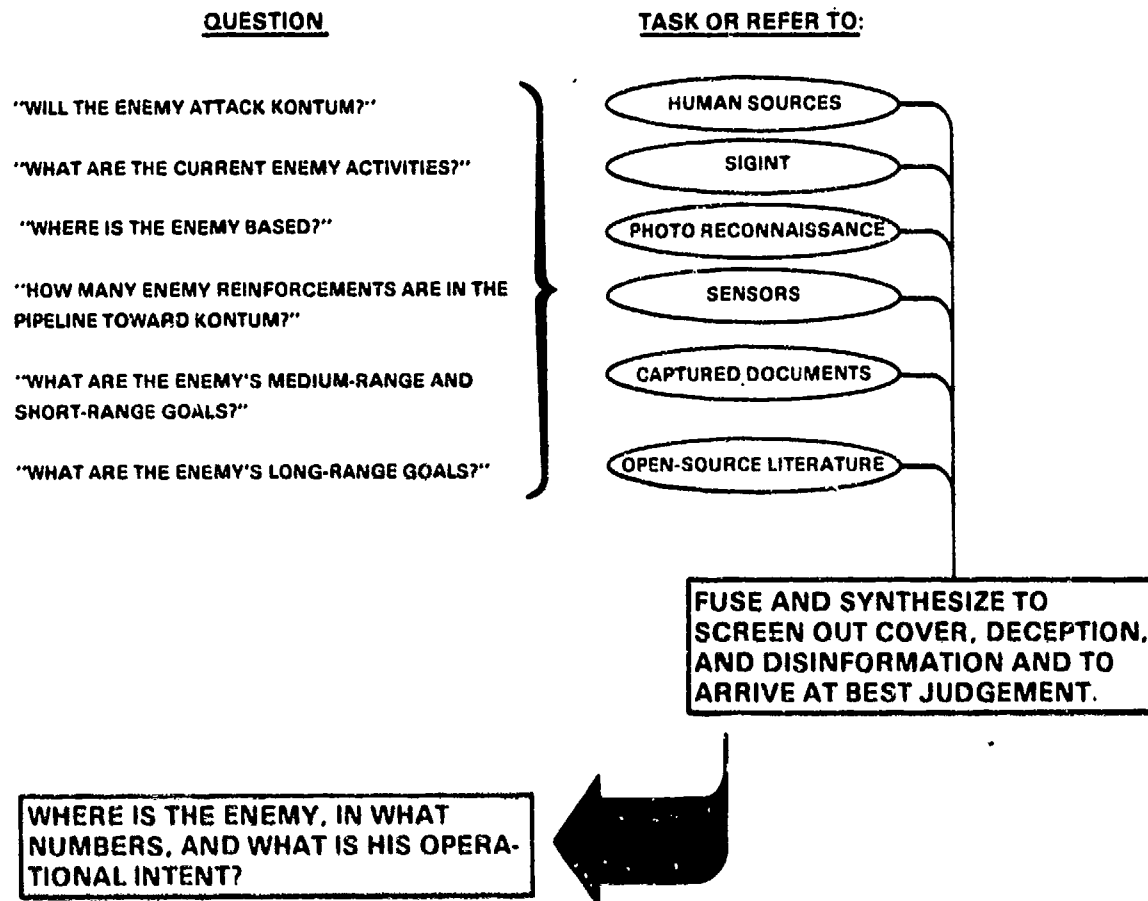


WHAT WAS IN VIETNAM:



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Figure 9-14. What Should Have Been: The Necessary Effort



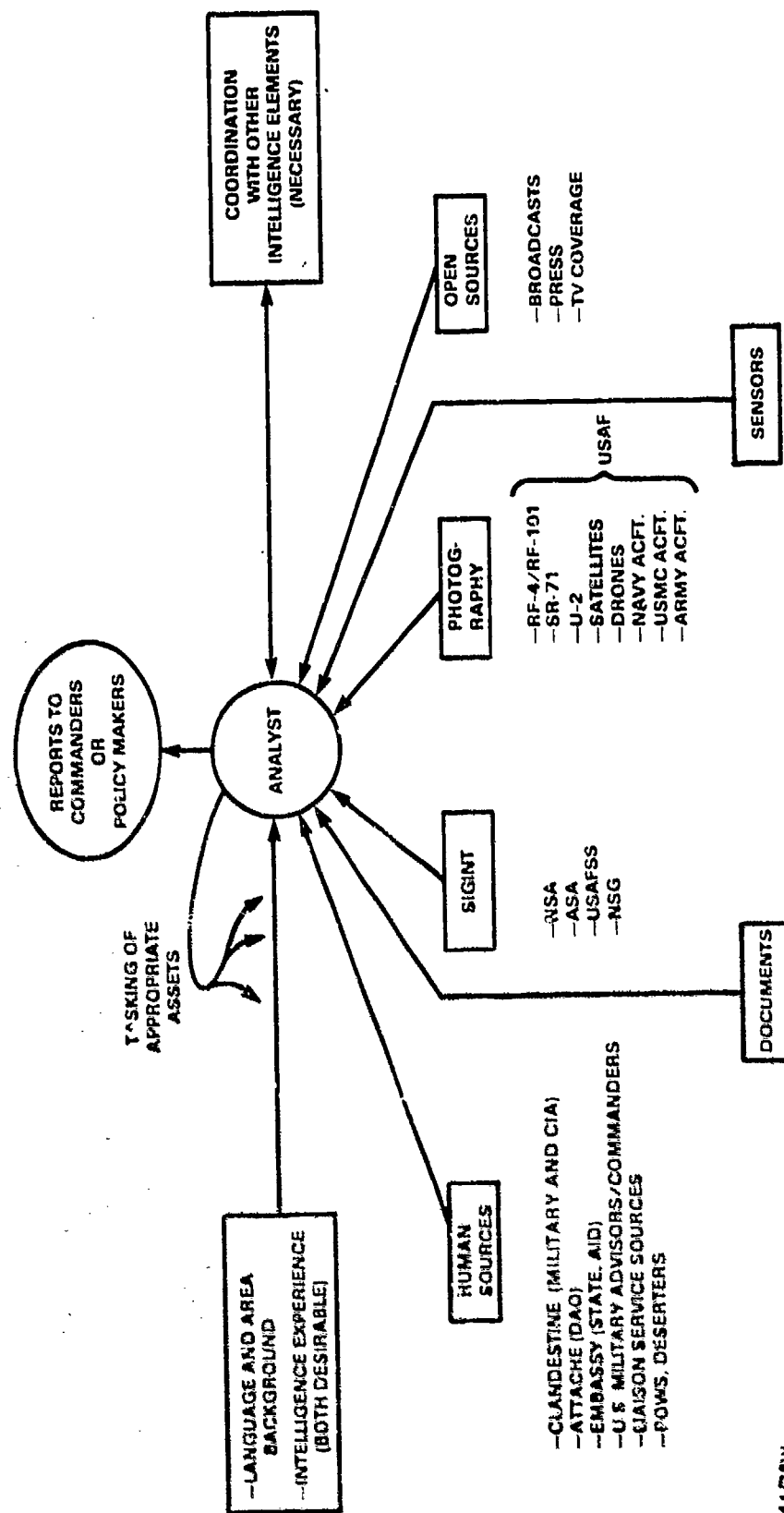
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SOURCE: BDM Analysis of Intelligence Documentation and Interview Notes Reflected in the Endnotes to This Chapter

Figure 9-15. The Requirement for Multiple Sources

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- If the intelligence effort is to succeed in the first critical period of a crisis, there must exist a sufficient body of trained intelligence personnel in all specialties of the intelligence field, and personnel activities must have the capability of identifying and assigning to appropriate headquarters, field organizations, and combat units the requisite intelligence specialists.
- In any form of hostilities, people are fundamental to the overall intelligence effort in the sense that agents, case officers, and analysts exploit HUMINT -- people and the documents they produce, such as diaries, directives, reports, etc., or the theoretical writings of key figures such as Mao, Ho, Giap, and others -- which gives the analysts the best perspective on enemy intentions, while technicians exploit technical sources such as SIGINT, sensors, photo reconnaissance, etc., and are best geared to answer questions relating to enemy capabilities and current operations. (See Figure 9-16). Indeed, simple methods, performed well, tend to work best against a non-technical enemy.
- The US still lacks a sophisticated and sound information gathering and analytical process to divine and order probable enemy "intentions" to complement and supplement the evaluation of his capabilities
- Commanders (and their staff officers) who provide intelligence or operational data to the press must establish good working relationships to prevent the "credibility gaps" and similar problems which otherwise might occur.
- Superior military force does not ensure victory without adequate intelligence. By the same token, an enemy who is not a technological match for his opponent must marshal a thorough intelligence and counterintelligence effort to offset his opponent's advantages in manpower, firepower, and equipment.
- Historically, intelligence training and use in peacetime for officers in the US Services have been less than adequate; selection and training of intelligence specialists have failed to meet



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SOURCE: BDM Analysis of Intelligence Documentation and Interview Notes  
Reflected in the Endnotes to This Chapter

Figure 9-16. Simplified Model of a Wartime Intelligence Effort

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early requirements in major crises. These problems should be resolved at the top command levels by recognition of the need for a truly professional military intelligence corps in peacetime to assure its availability in time of war.

- The predilection among many commanders and their staffs for trying to achieve consensus in the analysis and reporting of intelligence information must be avoided at all cost; divergent opinions and conflicting analyses should be tolerated, listened to, and even encouraged.
- Insurgents operating in territory familiar to them will succumb to regular forces only if the regulars know and understand their insurgent enemy and then fully exploit their own mobility, firepower, communications, and other modern advantages without counterproductive fallout among any indigenous populace. That requires good intelligence.

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## ACRONYMS FOR CHAPTER 9

ASA	Army Security Agency
CDEC	Combined Documents Exploitation Center
CI	Counterintelligence
CICV	Combined Intelligence Center, Vietnam
CIDG	Civilian Irregular Defense Groups
CIO	RVN's CIA
CMEC	Combined Materiel Exploitation Center
CMIC	Combined Military Interrogation Center
COMSEC	Communications Security
CORDS	Civil Operations and Revolutionary Development Support
COSVN	Central Office for South Vietnam
CRA	DRV's Central Research Agency
DF	Direction Finding
FAC	Forward Air Controller
ICD	Imitative Communication Deception
ICR	Intelligence Collection Requirements
IR	Infrared
JGS	Joint General Staff
KCA	Khmer Communist Army
KIQ	Key Intelligence Question(s)
MI	Military Intelligence
MSS	Military Security Service, GVN
NICC	National Intelligence Estimate
NIE	National Intelligence Estimate
OB	Order of Battle
OPSEC	Operation Security
PAVN	People's Army of Vietnam
PRU	Provincial Reconnaissance Units
RR	Radio Research Group
SIGINT	Signal Intelligence

SNIE	Special National Intelligence Estimate
SOG	Special Operations Group (Studies and Observations Group)
SSO	Special Security Officer
VCI	Viet Cong Infrastructure

CHAPTER 9 ENDNOTES

1. Gen. Bruce Palmer Jr., letter of 24 August 1973 to LTG William E. Potts, then Deputy Director, Defense Intelligence Agency. Copy held by Assistant Chief of Staff, Intelligence, Department of the Army.
2. Volume III of this study treats this subject in detail.
3. "Lansdale Team's Report on Covert Saigon Mission in '54 and '55," excerpts from the report of the Saigon Military Mission printed in The New York Times, The Pentagon Papers (New York: Bantam Books, Inc., 1971), pp. 53-66. Hereafter: NY Times, Pentagon Papers.
4. Table 9-1 is derived from Senator Mike Gravel, The Pentagon Papers (Boston: Beacon Press, 1971), Four Volumes, Volume I, pp. (in order of appearance on the table) 429-433; 525-531; 573-583; and 267. Hereafter: Gravel, Pentagon Papers.
5. "US Perceptions of the Insurgency," Gravel, Pentagon Papers Volume 1, p. 266.
6. Ibid., pp. 267-268.
7. US Intelligence Assessment, 7 March 1960. Gravel, Pentagon Papers, Volume 1, p. 338.
8. Howard Frazier, ed., Uncloaking the CIA (New York: The Free Press, 1978).
9. Colonel Hoang Ngoi Lung, Intelligence. Indochina Refugee Authored Monograph Program, prepared for Department of the Army, Office of Chief of Military History (McLean, VA: General Research Corporation, 31 October 1976), p. 12. Hereafter referred to as Lung, Intelligence. This is a useful and authoritative work on the organizations and operations of the South Vietnamese intelligence effort.
10. Table 9-1 is based on excerpts from "A Program of Action for South Vietnam" May 8, 1961 presented to President Kennedy by an interdepartmental task force. NY Times, Pentagon Papers, pp. 119-125.
11. Gravel, Pentagon Papers, Volume II, p. 439. This section discusses "The Context of Decisions" in The Kennedy Programs (1961-1963).
12. President Kennedy created the 303 Committee after the 1961 Bay of Pigs operation (Operation Pluto) to place high-priority intelligence operations under the institutional authority of the President. It might be noted that the in-country intelligence operations were grossly inadequate and could hardly be termed bold.



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13. MG Alfred M. Gray, Jr., USMC, BDM Interview on August 9, 1979 at Quantico, VA. General Gray, then a major, was one of the pioneers of Marine Corps SIGINT. He later served several additional tours in RVN. On November 9, 1978, MG George A. Godding, USA (Ret.) was interviewed at the BDM Corporation, and provided numerous insights into these early operations--as well as subsequent US SIGINT operations--in Vietnam.
14. Victor Marchetti and John D. Marks, The CIA and the Cult of Intelligence (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1974), pp. 119-120. In some instances, the signals would be recorded by observation planes that would relay the information to attack aircraft for bombing raids.
15. Christopher Robbins, Air America (New York: G. P. Putnam Sons, 1979), passim.
16. William Colby, Honorable Men: My Life in the CIA (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1978), p. 234. The PRU came in for bad publicity later because the nature of their operations made them appear solely as "hit teams" for assassinating VC.
17. Gravel, Pentagon Papers, Volume 2, p. 456. This section of Volume 2 discusses the Kennedy programs 1961-1963.
18. MG Joseph A. McChristian, USA, The Role of Military Intelligence, Vietnam Studies Series (Washington, D.C.: Department of the Army, 1974), p. 169.
19. Col. Charles A. Morris, USA, undated monograph entitled "One Man's View of Intelligence Management in SEA," an interesting and informative source regarding military intelligence.
20. Table 9-3 is based on Gravel, Pentagon Papers, Volume II, pp. (in order of appearance on the table) 417, 418, 15, 166, 628, 167, and 171.
21. Secretary of Defense McNamara memorandum for the President, 21 December 1963, Subject: Vietnam Situation, Document 156, Gravel, Pentagon Papers, Volume III, p. 494. Also referred to in Vol. II, p. 192.
22. Ibid., Volume II, p. 194. General Harkins particularly objected to the CIA team's findings.
23. Ibid., "Initiation of Covert Operations" Vol. III, pp. 149-150.
24. Ibid., pp. 149-151.

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25. ENDNOTE DELETED  
Further details of the Diem coup are found in Chapter 3, Volume III.
26. McChristian, pp. 18-19. This book gives a comprehensive view of operations Cedar Falls and Junction City as well as a thorough discussion of the organization of US military intelligence in 1965-67.
27. MG George A. Godding, USA(Ret) manuscript comments, December 1979.
28. Gravel, Pentagon Papers, Vol. IV, "The Air War in North Vietnam, 1965-1968," Chronology, pp. 1-17.
29. McChristian, p. 47.
30. Figure 9-2 is based on McChristian, pp. 27, 34, 41, 48. Manning figures are for the year 1967 when the best data are available; also see Lung, Intelligence, p. 83.
31. Lung, Intelligence, pp. 83-84. This monograph gives a good detailed view of the operating conditions of each of the combined centers.
32. Ibid., p. 113.
33. Colby, pp. 169-170. Also see Department of Defense, "Report on Selected Air and Ground Operations in Cambodia and Laos." Paper prepared September 10, 1973 in response to a request from Senator Symington.
34. CINCPAC and COMUSMACV, Report on the War in Vietnam (As of 30 June 1968), (Washington D. C.: US Government Printing Office, 1968), p. 119.
35. Col. Charles A. Morris, US Army, undated letter entitled "One Man's View of Intelligence Management in SEA June 64-June 68." Col. Morris served as G-2 advisor in I & III ARVN Corps 1964-65; Deputy Chief of Staff and Chief of the Intelligence Production Division, G2, USARPAC, July 65 - June 67; and Director of MACV J2 Production elements and J2 (Forward) under General Abrams during Tet 1968. He added that "... we have not trained our intelligence analysts to recognize logistical indicators and translate them into meaningful intelligence." Letter available in the office of the Assistant Chief of Staff, Intelligence,

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Department of the Army. General George Godding, in his interview at BDM/Washington on 9 November 1979, pointed out that some US analysts did have a good understanding of the Ho Chi Minh Trail network.

36. Reconnaissance aircraft locations represent a composite of USAF, USMC, and USA assets in the late 1960s. Several unclassified sources were used to compile these data including: Carl Berger, ed., The United States Air Force in Southeast Asia (Washington, D.C.: Office of Air Force History, 1977); LTG Keith B. McCutcheon, USMC, "Marine Aviation in Vietnam, 1962-1970," in The Marines in Vietnam 1954-1973, An Anthology and Annotated Bibliography (Washington, D.C.: History and Museums Division, Headquarters, US Marine Corps, 1974), and selected articles from military journals including Flight International, Aviation Weekly, Army, etc.
37. Berger, pp. 347-348. This work gives a wide-ranging and authoritative account of aerial reconnaissance programs run by the USAF.
38. Lung, Intelligence, p. 138.
39. Multiple unclassified sources. Supra note 35.
40. ENDNOTE DELETED
41. McChristian, p. 162.
42. Gravel, Pentagon Papers, Volume 2, p. 8.
43. Sam Adams, "Vietnam Cover-up: Playing War with Numbers," Harper's, May 1975, pp. 41-44, 62-73. William Colby has stated that this issue goes "to the very heart of the intelligence profession." Marginal notes on copy of the article held by the office of the Assistant Chief of Staff, Intelligence, Department of the Army.
44. Col. Norman J. Campbell, USA (Ret), Interviewed September 10, 1979 at The BDM Corporation. In 1967-68, then LTC Campbell commanded the 303d Radio Research Battalion in support of II Field Force in RVN.
45. Ibid. Strength figures represent best estimate at that time.
46. MG Gray interview.
47. Ibid.
48. Lung, Intelligence, p. 126.
49. Paul Dickson, The Electronic Battlefield (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1976), pp. 83-95, and other unclassified sources.

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50. Ibid., and multiple unclassified professional journals in the early 1970s, including Aviation Week and Space Technology and Air Force.
51. Colby, p. 269. A thorough account of the Phoenix Program is given in pp. 266-288.
52. Interview on 13 September 1979 with two active duty Army Intelligence officers, both lieutenant colonels, who asked not to be identified.
53. Snepp, p. 131.
54. Congressional Record May 10, 1972, p. 16763. This issue of the Congressional Record reprints the responses to National Security Study Memorandum 1 (NSSM1). For a list of the 28 questions posed in NSSM1 also see William R. Corson, Consequences of Failure (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1974), Appendix pp. 175-183 and a summary of responses, pp. 175-205.
55. Ibid.
56. Ibid., p. 16799.
57. Ibid.
58. Thomas Powers, The Man Who Kept the Secrets (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1979), p. 188.
59. Ibid., pp. 185-196.
60. Lung, Intelligence, p. 154. A cautionary note must be interjected at this point. If the DRV leadership actually believed that a general uprising would occur, they confused anti-GVN and anti-US sentiment with procommunism. In that event, they suffered from poor intelligence. If the Tet offensive was undertaken to disrupt GVN's improving position and pacification with the expectation that the VCI would be decimated, they demonstrated remarkable, long-range psychological activity. While still not proved conclusively, the former scenario is the more logical and more widely accepted.
61. The Village Voice, New York, February 16, 1976. The Village Voice is a left-leaning New York paper which strongly identified with the anti-war movement.
62. New York Times, Pentagon Papers, p. 605. It is important to view Tet from President Johnson's viewpoint as well. See his book The Vantage Point (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1971).
63. Lyman B. Kirkpatrick, The US Intelligence Community (New York: Hill and Wang, 1973), p. 139. Kirkpatrick presents a balanced and thorough treatment of the "domestic spying" controversy.

64. Lung, Intelligence, p. 11.
65. Kirkpatrick, p. 123.
66. Ibid., p. 39. Clearly both the US and Vietnamese intelligence efforts were hampered by the various problems of coordinating their activities.
67. Denis Warner, Certain Victory: How Hanoi Won the War (Kansas City: Sheed Andrews and McNeel, Inc. 1977), p. 159. Warner has been acclaimed as one of the outstanding correspondents in Vietnam, and began covering the conflict there as early as 1949. This book offers a penetrating look at enemy forces and decision making.
68. Adams, "Vietnam Cover-Up. . .", p. 72. The tale of the Cambodian Khmer Rouge order of battle numbers illustrates how key topics can sometimes go uncovered because a certain office has no "charter" to follow them.
69. Benjamin F. Schemmer, The Raid (New York: Harper & Row, 1976). This book remains as the authoritative unclassified source about the Son Tay operation.
70. Ibid., pp. 282-283. Several recent books by former POWs bear this out.
71. Adams, p. 71. Other informed sources interviewed for this project believe this estimate to be credible, although the exact number of penetrations by hostile intelligence forces remains uncertain.
72. Lung, Intelligence, p. 157.
73. Sources for these production figures are: For CIA Station--Frank Snapp, Decent Interval. An Insider's Account of Saigon's Indecent End (New York: Random House, 1977), p. 13. For Unit 101--Lung, Intelligence, p. 144. For USDAO--LTC H. A. Shockley, USA. Monograph "Intelligence Collection in Vietnam, March 1974-March 1975." (The last source apparently was leaked to the Pike Committee in 1975; it is a detailed account of the operations of the USDAO during the last phase of American involvement in Vietnam).
74. Multiple unclassified sources.
75. Lung, Intelligence, p. 131.
76. Prepared testimony by LTC Shockley, December 3, 1973, before the House Select Committee on Intelligence (Pike Committee). Copy viewed at the office of the Assistant Chief of Staff, Intelligence, US Army.

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77. Statement of LTG Daniel O. Graham, USA, Director of DIA, December 3, 1975. LTG Graham defended DIA's performance in assessing the situation in South Vietnam, and took issue with LTC Shockley's testimony.
78. Snapp, p. 566.
79. Marchetti and Marks, p. 71.
80. Snapp, p. 130. This tendency is not unique to Vietnam. In other crises, analysts sometimes fall back on their own cliches, and often fit the data to support their ingrained perceptions. The tendency to fit information into a matrix was also pointed out by LTG Vernon Walters in a BDM interview on 8 June 1979.
81. Ibid., p. 131.
82. Ibid., p. 132.
83. Lung, Intelligence, pp. 138-142. The monograph accurately states that the Buffalo Hunter drones and RF-4 reconnaissance aircraft ceased operations over Laos in mid-1974. Thus, the ARVN now lacked these vital sources.
84. Lung, Intelligence, pp. 138-140.
85. Ibid., p. 120.
86. Ibid., pp. 136-140.
87. Warner, p. 20. Throughout the war, the DRV was heavily dependent on Soviet and Chinese supplies to sustain its war effort. US intelligence made an effort to keep a running count of these supplies, by type of equipment and by equivalent dollar value.
88. Snapp, p. 174. The enemy forces frequently employed radio silence before major offensives. Also see Lung, Intelligence, p. 214.
89. Ibid., p. 179.
90. Ibid., pp. 215, 276.
91. Ibid., p. 276.
92. MG Gray interview.
93. Lung, Intelligence, p. 197.
94. BDM analysis of intelligence documentation and interview notes reflected in the endnotes to this chapter (primarily Lung, Intelligence, passim).

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95. Ibid.
96. Ibid., p. 214.
97. In September 1966, one enemy unit intercepted 7,793 allied messages, out of which some 7,745, (99.4 percent) were exploited. These figures are based on that unit's own report. See Lung Intelligence, p. 214.
98. Col. Campbell interview.
99. Lung, Intelligence, passim.
100. McChristian, p. 139.
101. Snett, p. 135. Sam Adams, another CIA analyst familiar with Vietnamese realities, contends that the VC had controlled the counter-intelligence branch of the MSS for many years. See "Vietnam Cover-Up. . ." in Harpers, p. 71.
102. Lung, Intelligence, p. 37. The National Police (NP) was a much larger organization than the MSS, with a membership of 72,000 in 1966. The NP grew throughout the war years, reaching 121,000 by 1971.
103. In July 1973, LTG William E. Potts, Deputy Director, Defense Intelligence Agency and former J2, USMACV, asked numerous officers who had served in command or intelligence-staff billets in Vietnam to provide him with comments on "Lessons Learned." Forty-three replies to his query are on file in the office of the Assistant Chief of Staff, Intelligence, Department of the Army. Most of the replies are unclassified and provide extremely useful insights on intelligence matters. The many replies tend to reinforce each other. For that reason, the text in Sections H and I is not endnoted: rather the material is derived from the replies to General Potts's letter; a variety of sources reflected in the endnotes to this chapter; BDM interviews with MG George Godding USA (Ret) on 28 November 1978 and LTG Vernon A. Walters, USA (Ret) on 8 June 1979; the excellent Vietnam Refugee Authored Monograph Series prepared for DA OCMH by The General Research Corporation; and discussions of these source materials by BDM analysts. Among the more useful and thought-provoking responses to General Potts that figure prominently in these two sections are the following:

MG Howard H. Cooksey, ADC and CG Americal Division May 1968 - March 1969 and D C/S Ops for USARV March 1969 to November 1969. Later CG I Corps at Hue, May 1972 to January 1973, then C/S MACV until March 1973.

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LTG Daniel O. Graham, former Chief of Current Intelligence and Estimates Division, J-2 USMACV 1968-69 and Director, Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA)

MG B.E. Huffman Jr., Chief of Staff, II Field Force, 1969.

LTG William A. Knowlton, general counterintelligence, attache, and military intelligence background. Served in CORDS in Vietnam (1966-67) Assistant Division Commander, 9th Division in the Delta January-June 1968.

Col. Charles A. Morris, US Army. Former G2 advisor in RVN (1964-65), DC/S and C/S of Intelligence Production, G-2 USARPAC (1965-67), Director of MACV J2 Production elements and J2 (Forward) under General Abrams during Tet 1968.

Gen. Bruce Palmer Jr. US Army (Ret). Former Deputy CG, USARV (1967-68), and CG II Field Force (1967).

Gen. William C. Westmoreland, US Army (Ret), former COMUSMACV (1964-68) and Chief of Staff US Army (1968-72).

104. The 460th TRW at Tan Son Nhut also provided regular coverage throughout South Vietnam, but the photo reconnaissance effort was offset markedly by the widespread jungles and the ability of the enemy forces to apply a wide range of camouflage measures.
105. Norman Dixon, On the Psychology of Military Incompetence (New York: Basic Books, 1976), pp. 152-153.
106. MACV press release of November 24, 1967; the release followed a major conference between MACV and CIA analysts concerning the enemy head count.
107. Westmoreland, Report on the War in Vietnam, p. 145. He states that "Operation CEDAR FALLS was the first large-scale operation to benefit from 'pattern activity analysis,' a system we had begun to develop in mid-1966." The operation took place 8-26 January 1967, against VC MR 4 headquarters in the Iron Triangle.
108. ENDNOTE DELETED
109. Lung, Intelligence, p. 113; McChristian, p. 50, however, indicates that order of battle information was collected in sanctuaries, though it was sparse.
110. A portion of the Pike Committee documents made available to the press (Village Voice, February 16, 1976) notes the pressure put on the CIA



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by Walt Rostow to prepare positive indications of progress in the pacification program. Upon hearing from the CIA that there were few signs of progress, Rostow replied, "I am amazed at your unwillingness to support your President in his time of need."

111. Adams, "Vietnam Cover-Up . . ."

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## CHAPTER 10 LOGISTICS AND BASES

Customer Satisfaction. The military commander in Vietnam, the General Accounting Office, and Congress all have attested that, with relatively minor and temporary exceptions, U.S. forces committed to conflict have never been better supplied than those in SE Asia. In this context, it may be said that the logistician achieved his goal - satisfying the requirements of the soldier, sailor, marine, and airman facing the enemy at the end of the logistic pipeline.<sup>1/</sup>

### A. INTRODUCTION

#### 1. General

Logistics played a vital role in our involvement in Vietnam from 1950, when the first US military aid was provided to the French forces in Indochina, until the fall of the Republic of Vietnam in 1975. In this chapter an examination will be made to determine the following:

- The adequacy of our logistic policies, organization, and contingency planning.
- The effectiveness of the supply pipeline.
- The degree that economy of resources impacted on operations.
- The impact of a guerrilla environment on logistic operations.
- The influence of US financial management on logistical operations.
- The impact on the effectiveness of the US logistic support if a national emergency had been declared.

#### 2. Previous Review Efforts

Much has been written concerning "logistics" in the Vietnam War. A major study effort was conducted in 1969 by the Joint Logistic Review Board (JLRB, also referred to as the Besson Board).<sup>2/</sup> That review board, comprised of senior flag-officer logisticians assisted by a staff of 105

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military and civilian personnel, produced three major volumes consisting of:

- 15 major findings;
- 46 selective recommendations relating to the major findings and deserving high-level executive attention;
- 18 monographs on various functional areas of logistic support setting forth 261 recommendations.

The Besson Board reviewed logistics more from its joint application than from the standpoint of the separate military services. The scope of the review was limited generally to the period 1965 to 1970. Further, the JLRB did not address two major areas of logistic support; force structure and the acquisition of major weapon systems to include research and development and procurement.<sup>3/</sup>

The Chief of Staff, US Army, directed that a series of studies be conducted in the various functional areas of operations in Vietnam. These are known as the Vietnam Studies Series, published by the Department of the Army in the 1970s. The volumes cover, inter alia, such areas of logistical interest as Command and Control, US Army Engineers, Medical Support, Base Development and Financial Management generally in the period 1965-1970. Most of these monographs were prepared by general officers who had intimate knowledge of the study area. The reports are basically factual but are not necessarily analytical or objective.<sup>4/</sup>

Within the limits of time available for research, the historical records available at Office of the Chief of Military History, the Army War College and Military History Institute, and DARCOM have been examined to document critical issues concerning logistic operations in support of Vietnam.

### B. THE LOGISTIC EFFORT

The US was directly involved in Indochina/Vietnam conflicts for a quarter of a century. The magnitude of the logistical effort expended in

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that period is difficult to quantify. In general the dimensions of the logistical effort can be summarized as follows:

1. French Phase of the War (1950-1954)

\$1.3 billion in US equipment was provided to the French and Associated States Armies prior to the Geneva Accords. The major logistic effort was delivery of equipment to the French.

2. Military Assistance Advisory Phase (1954-1962)

During this period the strength of the Vietnamese Army grew from a force of 170,000 in 1955 with 325 US advisory personnel to a force of 219,000 with some 4,000 US military advisory personnel by 1962. The civil guard (a constabulary/gendarmerie organization) and the self-defense corps comprised of local civilian defense units, also expanded.

The primary US military objective during this period was to help establish a viable, indigenous Vietnamese military structure through military assistance and advisory support. The US provided weapons, combat vehicles and other military equipment and supplies which the Vietnamese economy was incapable of producing. Much of the material provided in this period was similar to that which the US had provided the French during the period 1950-1954.

3. MACV Advisory Period (1962-1964) 5/

The Military Assistance Advisory Command, Vietnam (MACV) was established in February 1962 as a subordinate unified command under CINCPAC. Initially, MAAG Vietnam was a subordinate element of MACV. After General Westmoreland's arrival in 1964, the MAAG staff and functions were incorporated into the MACV staff. During this crucial period, marked by political and social turmoil and ever-increasing insurgency in South Vietnam, the US was supporting and advising 216,000 ARVN troops, a Civil Guard strength of 85,900, the Self Defense Corps numbering about 100,000 and the Civilian Irregular Defense Group of 18,000. US advisory and support personnel grew to a total of 23,310. Logistic responsibilities were substantial.

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### 4. Major US Combat Involvement (1965-1968)

This period of US participation in combat operations saw the rapid escalation in scope and magnitude of US logistic support:

- In one year 388,000 US troops deployed to Vietnam.
- US logistics supported 1,000,000 men including 550,000 US forces during this period.
- 17,000,000 tons of cargo were shipped by sea - 750,000 ST were shipped by air.
- A \$5 billion construction program was begun to build base camps headquarters, ports, depots, airfields, hospitals and other support facilities.
- 2,000,000 men were transported to and from Vietnam.
- A \$3,000,000 hospital was established in Japan.
- The major offshore base on Okinawa doubled in size.
- A major base was developed in Thailand to support operations from that country in support of Vietnam. The installations included a port depot, an airfield, a hospital, communication facilities and major road construction.

### 5. US Redeployment and Vietnamization Phase (1969-1972)

During this period the logistic effort involved a further buildup of the RVNAF, the major redeployment of US forces, the retrograde and redistribution of excess supplies and equipment, and the phase down of the offshore base structure. In late 1972 in anticipation of a ceasefire, the US pushed additional equipment to Vietnam under projects Enhance and Enhance Plus. GVN inventories of military equipment were beefed up to provide as high a base as possible for the one-for-one replacement provision of the expected treaty.<sup>6/</sup>

### 6. Vietnam's Abandonment: US Phase Out (1973-1975)

During this period the logistic effort was dominated by US political efforts to sever the political and logistical umbilical cord between RVN and the US. Supply support was constrained and the US advisory and logistical support effort was limited to that provided for on a contract basis. This period ended with the defeat of the GVN by the DRV.

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### C. SOUTHEAST ASIAN ENVIRONMENT FROM A LOGISTIC VIEWPOINT

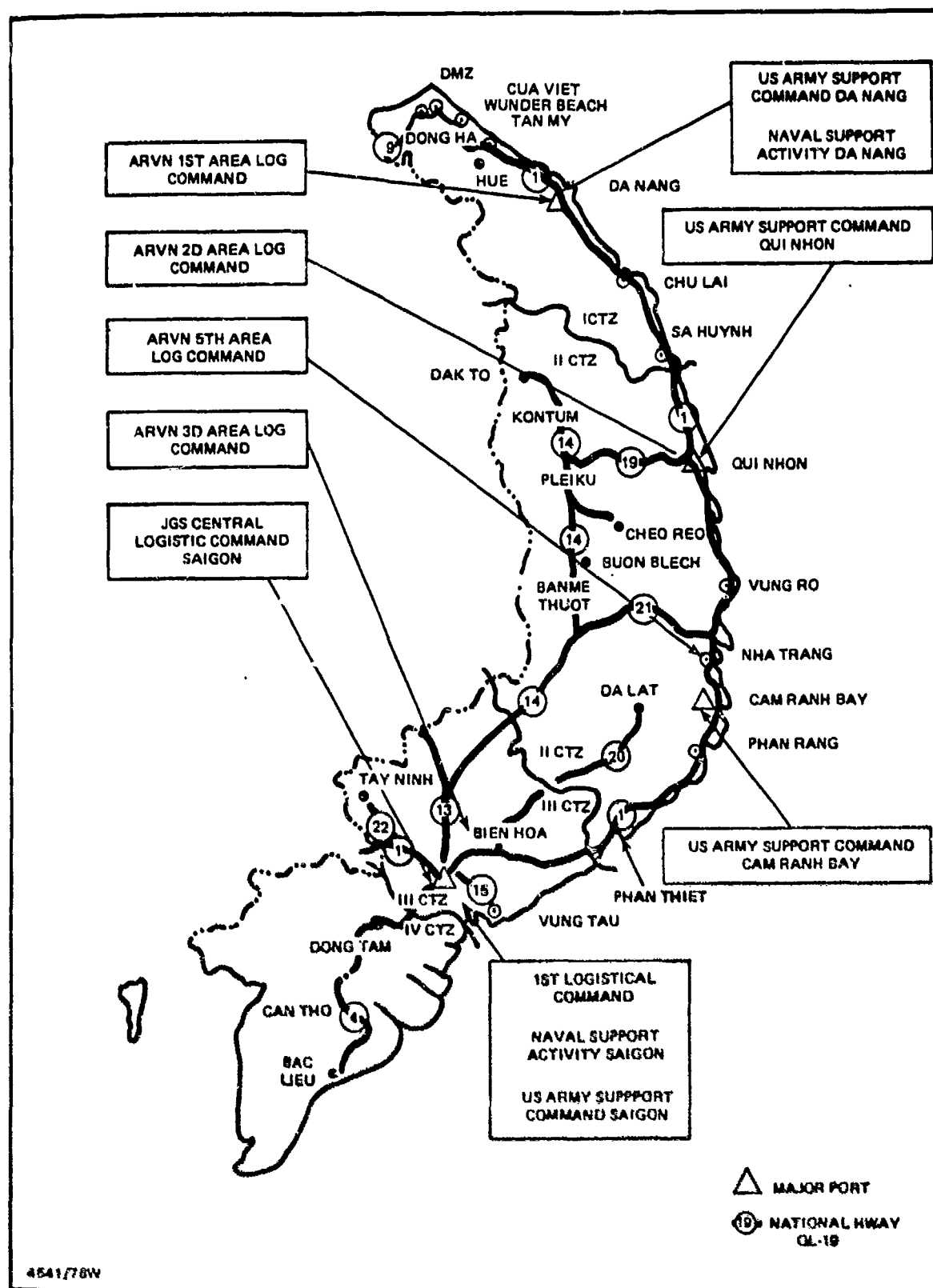
From a military logistics viewpoint in 1950, Southeast Asia was an underdeveloped, colonial, agricultural area, with minimal resources to support an indigenous conventional military force. As noted in a report of a team of technical experts covertly sent to Indochina by the Chief of Staff (General Ridgway C/S, US Army), "Indochina is devoid of the logistical, geographic, and related resources necessary to a substantial American ground effort." 7/

Tea, rice, rubber and minerals were siphoned off for use in France; social, political and economic development were sanctioned and supported by the French only to the extent that they facilitated French colonial policy. Vietnam had only two major ports of relatively small capacity, Saigon and Haiphong.

A rail system ran along the coast from Saigon to the Chinese border. Unfortunately, the railroad was severed in numerous places during World War II by US carrier strikes and insurgency actions against the French. The road network was limited to a major coastal macadam road, (Route 1) paralleling the railroad from Saigon to Hanoi. Like the railroad, it was severed in various locations where bridges had been destroyed. This necessitated the use of ferries, the capabilities of which were marginal even when they were operating.

The primitive road network led from coastal areas into the highlands and then into Laos or Cambodia. Only the road systems in the major cities had been developed by the French. (See Map 10-1.)

Major French military facilities consisted of barracks compounds in the major cities of Saigon, Hanoi, Phnom Penh, Danang, Vientiane and Hue with company-size "Beau Geste" type barracks/forts in the hinterlands, the Mekong delta, and the highlands. There were only three major airfields in all of South Vietnam - two in the Saigon area and one at Danang. However, there were some minor landing fields at Dalat, Pleiku, and elsewhere, built primarily to serve the needs of the French colons. The major French military airfield in Laos was at Seno (near Savanakheth).



SOURCE: Indochina Refugee Authored Monographs, RVNAF and US Operations: Cooperation and Coordination

Map 10-1. Major Highways and Logistic Commands

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There was a French Navy yard in Saigon, a deep-water naval anchorage at Cam Ranh Bay, and minor naval facilities in Haiphong and Danang.

The French purposely avoided developing industry in Indochina or teaching technological skills to the natives; what little industry existed was located mainly in the North. Agricultural work sustained the bulk of the population. Education and health care remained minimal. Tuberculosis took its toll; the average life expectancy was 35 years. Cambodia and Laos were economically more backward than Vietnam.

Similarly, the French controlled the Vietnamese Army (ARVN), which, while it had its own combat formations, was led by and received its logistics support from the French. Thus, French policy had succeeded in maintaining a native logistical vacuum during French domination in Indochina.8/

### D. SUPPORT OF THE FRENCH

#### 1. The Beginning

On 2 February 1950 the US government recognized the French-established Vietnamese government of Bao Dai. In May 1950 the French government, then engaged in a bitter struggle with the Viet Minh requested US military and economic aid. The initial request was for \$60 million. In December 1950 the US signed the Pentilateral Agreements with France and "The Associated States" of Indochina, Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia, which became the basis for US economic and military aid for Vietnam.9/ To meet the French requirement for military aid, the president released \$10 million from the President's Emergency Fund. Most of the aid provided was weapons, ammunition, and other support equipment.10/

#### 2. MAAG, Indochina

A small Military Assistance Advisory Group (MAAG) was established by the Secretary of Defense. The advance party moved to Saigon on August 3, 1950. MAAG, Indochina, with an authorized strength of 128 personnel, was assembled in Saigon on 20 November 1950 as a provisional unit. It was organized on a Service basis with Army, Air Force, and Navy sections. The first chief was Brigadier General Francis G. Brink. MAAG, Indochina's



main mission was to manage the US military assistance program for Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos and to provide logistical support for the French Union forces.<sup>11/</sup> The mission of the MAAG was limited to the provision of materiel assistance to the French forces and indirect provision of aid to the forces of the Associated States. In reality, the MAAG was an advisory agency to the French, assisting them in "ordering" the aid they required and, in accordance with US law, providing "in use" inspection of US equipment given the French under the aid program.

How effective was the MAAG in carrying out US policy in Indochina? MAAG, Indochina, was a relatively small "supply support organization (50 personnel in 1950, 342 in 1954)".<sup>12/</sup> To the French the MAAG was an "ordering agency." As far as advising the French in conducting the war, it had no function whatsoever. As one anonymous US general officer (Retired) put it, "One would be naive to expect the French to accept or seek US military advice. French military egotism would preclude it. Hence, one finds the MAAG providing no advisory functions to French Union."<sup>13/</sup>

The MAAG had no real advisory function. Further, the French restricted the operations of the MAAG in dealing with French logistics and combat forces. In the latter stages of the war the French even accused the US of interference with French requests for aid, thus slowing aid deliveries.<sup>14/</sup>

The MAAG's responsibility for in-use inspections was carried out only at the pleasure and convenience of the French. The French resented the MAAG's efforts to advise, screen, inspect and verify.<sup>15/</sup>

### 3. Magnitude of Aid

During this period the US provided the French with some \$2.6 billion worth of military aid with the bulk of the aid being provided in 1952-1954. This included:<sup>16/</sup>

- 1,800 combat vehicles,
- 30,887 motor vehicles,
- 361,522 small arms,

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438 naval craft,  
2 aircraft carriers, and  
500 aircraft.

#### 4. Effectiveness of the Aid

The US recognized that the primary responsibility for restoration of peace and security in Indochina rested with the French. During the entire period the French held the trump card, exerting significant restraints on US policy and action. The French carried the bulk of the military burden in Indochina. This was acceptable to the Americans, who were already deeply involved in Korea, and who recognized that air and naval power alone could not ensure a victory. But it also meant that many of the US aims in Indochina would be frustrated. 17/

This reluctance of the Americans to commit combat troops to Vietnam and the resolve of the French to control all that was theirs to control proved to be the main stumbling block preventing the attainment of US goals. By keeping logistics facilities under their control, the French prevented the US implementation of the policy stated in NSC 5405, calling for US support in the development of an independent logistical system for the Armed Forces of the Associated States. 18/

The US was prevented from working more closely with the French because of the friction produced by their mutually incompatible logistics systems and doctrine. The US aid program turned out to be a one-way street. Most of the promises made by the French concerning the Navarre Plan and subsequent plans were calculated to promote the flow of aid, but those promises were not carried out or were executed tardily and reluctantly. The US goal of complete independence for the Associated States was not supported by the French to the extent the US desired. As a result, logistic development of the armed forces of the Associated States was delayed by at least five years.

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### 5. French-US Transition Period

#### a. General Situation

The signing of the Geneva Accords marked the beginning of the major US advisory and military assistance role in Indochinese affairs. In compliance with the Geneva Accords the French agreed to withdraw its forces from North Vietnam and the Viet Minh agreed to withdraw from Cambodia, Laos, and Cochin China and Annam. The 17th Parallel was to separate the South from the North. After consultation between the temporary South Vietnamese government and the DRV, elections were to be held in 1956. A joint commission would have the general responsibility for working out the disengagement of forces and implementation of the ceasefire. The introduction of arms, equipment and personnel was prohibited with the exception of normal troop rotation and replacement of damaged or destroyed materiel. The establishment of military bases, or the memberships of either zone in military alliances was prohibited. Also established to control military movements of forces or materiel was the ICC (International Control Commission) consisting of civilian/military representatives from Poland, India, and Canada. In general, in its supervisory role, the rule of unanimity was to apply to "questions concerning violation, or threats of violation, which might lead to resumption of hostilities."<sup>19/</sup> The French agreed to withdraw their expeditionary corps at the request of local governments.<sup>20/</sup>

US policies toward post-Geneva Indochina included:<sup>21/</sup>

- "Encourage" the French to turn over financial, administrative, and economic controls to Vietnamese.
- Give US aid directly to Vietnamese.
- Work with France to build up indigenous military forces able to provide internal security.
- Press France to grant total independence to Vietnam (including the right to withdraw from the French Union).
- Force Bao Dai and Diem to broaden the government base, elect an assembly, and draft a constitution.
- Urge that the French Expeditionary Force be retained as essential to South Vietnam's security.

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Significant from a logistic viewpoint is that aid would be delivered directly to the South Vietnamese government. However, the government and the Armed forces were incapable of accepting military aid - at the time all logistic facilities and operations were run by the French.

b. Collins/Ely Agreement 22/

In December 1954 Gen J. L. Collins was appointed special envoy to South Vietnam with the mission of coordinating all US programs that included French support. In June LTG O'Daniel, Chief MAAG, Indochina had obtained agreement with General Paul Ely, French High Commissioner for Vietnam and Commander in Chief French Expeditionary Force, for US participation in the training of the Vietnamese Armed Forces. However, it wasn't until December that the Collins/Ely memorandum of understanding developed the following joint position:

- France would grant full autonomy to RVNAF by July 1955.
- US would assume training responsibilities - US MAAG VN will direct training under Gen. Ely (French) direction.
- French/US instructors will phase out as RVNAF efficiency permitted.

Washington approved, and Paris, after initially objecting to the phase out of French trainers, accepted the agreement in February 1955.

c. Establishment of Joint Training Relations and Instruction Mission (TRIM)

As a result, in February, the Training Relations and Instruction Mission (TRIM) was established as a joint French/US Army training advisory organization to train the Vietnamese Army along US lines. 23/

TRIM was authorized 417 personnel. The French assigned 200 officers whose previous duties were either as cadre or advisor to Vietnam units. The US table of distribution called for 217 personnel of which only 68 were available. 24/ The mission of the Vietnamese Army as visualized by General Ely in his training directive to TRIM was:

- Establish law, order, and governmental control over all areas of South Vietnam.

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- Counter the guerrilla activities in the event of a new insurrection.
- Use conventional warfare against a Viet Minh invasion of South Vietnam.

During TRIM's one year lifetime (March 1955-March 1956) emphasis was placed on the establishment of a training infrastructure and the development of strong leadership at all levels of command. TRIM advisors were provided at the staff and field levels. Field advisors were assigned to units, schools and training centers. Initially, the advisory personnel were augmented by mobile training teams from CONUS on TDY status. Later, the ICC required TDY military personnel to be included in the 342-man limit which the US government, although not a signatory of the Accords, agreed to abide by. This military ceiling was overcome by using civilian technicians and specialists where possible. 25/

TRIM's operation was severely hampered by the internal political and military situation. There were vast differences in American and French training concepts, organizational doctrine, and particularly logistic procedures which made binational cooperation extremely difficult. 26/

The Vietnamese logistic facilities were still French controlled and the French were reluctant to permit the entry of Vietnamese and US advisors to their facilities. Hence, logistical training was generally limited to staff and unit level. Overall training effectiveness was nil.

The political differences between the French and Vietnamese during this period led to the withdrawal of all French personnel associated with TRIM by March 1956. President Diem was anti-French and finally refused the French admittance to Vietnamese Army unit areas or facilities. 27/ All cooperation between the Vietnamese Army and French ceased and actions against the Bien Xuyen and other militant sects declined dramatically. In February 1956, France divested itself of responsibilities for civil administration and the Government of Vietnam requested that France withdraw its military forces. On April 26, 1956 the French military command was dissolved.

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TRIM was abolished and the Combined Arms Training Organization Division (CATO) of MAAG assumed full responsibility for advising the Vietnamese Army.<sup>28/</sup> Though the French continued until 1957 to advise the Vietnamese Navy, France's disillusionment with Diem, Vietnam's withdrawal from the French Union, and above all France's colonial problems in North Africa contributed to France's decision to terminate its involvement with the US in developing the military and economic potential of South Vietnam as a free and independent nation.

### E. FRANCE LEAVES SOUTH VIETNAM

The departure of the French caused a major logistical crisis. Under the terms of the Pentilateral Agreement between France and the Associated states, title to that equipment which was furnished by the French as Military Aid, was to revert to the US after France no longer needed it for the purpose rendered. The military material aid amounted to approximately \$1.3 billion of arms and equipment. The Collins-Ely agreement of December 1954 provided for a joint survey to determine disposition of US-furnished equipment. The precipitate withdrawal of French Union forces from North Vietnam in 1954 and 1955 and the sudden withdrawal of the French Expeditionary Corps in 1955 and 1956 left Vietnam in a state of chaos.

The provision of the agreement regarding US equipment disposition was not carried out by the French. The Americans were refused entry by the French into depots and ports to inspect equipment being taken from Vietnam. The French purposely took the best US equipment with them and left the dregs spread all over South Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos. They literally walked off and left the depots, turning the keys over to the Vietnamese, who had no knowledge of their contents, storage procedures, or inventory information. The French left only a small military contingent in Saigon after 1956 to support the Navy training mission and the military training missions in Cambodia and Laos. At one location, the Phu To race track, unidentified military material in gray, weather-worn boxes was stacked two stories high and was referred to as the "Acre of Diamonds."<sup>29/</sup>

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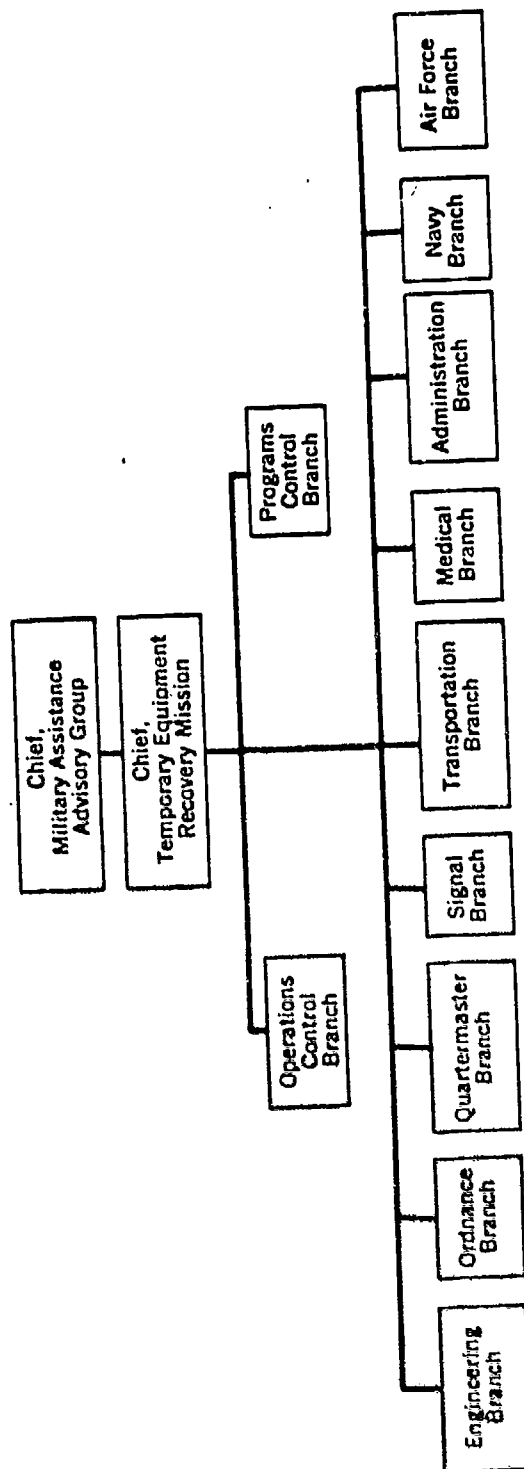
Vehicles were found throughout the country with rotten tires, parts missing, and severe body damage. Ammunition was abandoned throughout the country. Depots filled with spare parts had no inventory information. South Vietnam was literally one huge junkyard of American equipment and supplies.30/

The Vietnamese Army was unable to cope with the chaos and lacked the capability to restore and utilize the equipment. However, they were reluctant to dispose of it and decided to hoard it for a future conflict. After the departure of the French TRIM advisors, the MAAG with 342 officers and men had their hands full trying to cope with training the Vietnamese Army as a modern military force organized on divisional lines. The French had previously limited the Vietnamese to battalion-size units. It was evident by the end of 1955 that the MAAG would have to be increased in order to meet the logistic crisis. The value of the equipment and the possibility of it passing into Viet Minh hands convinced the State Department that additional personnel should be sent to Vietnam to assist in solving the logistic problems.31/

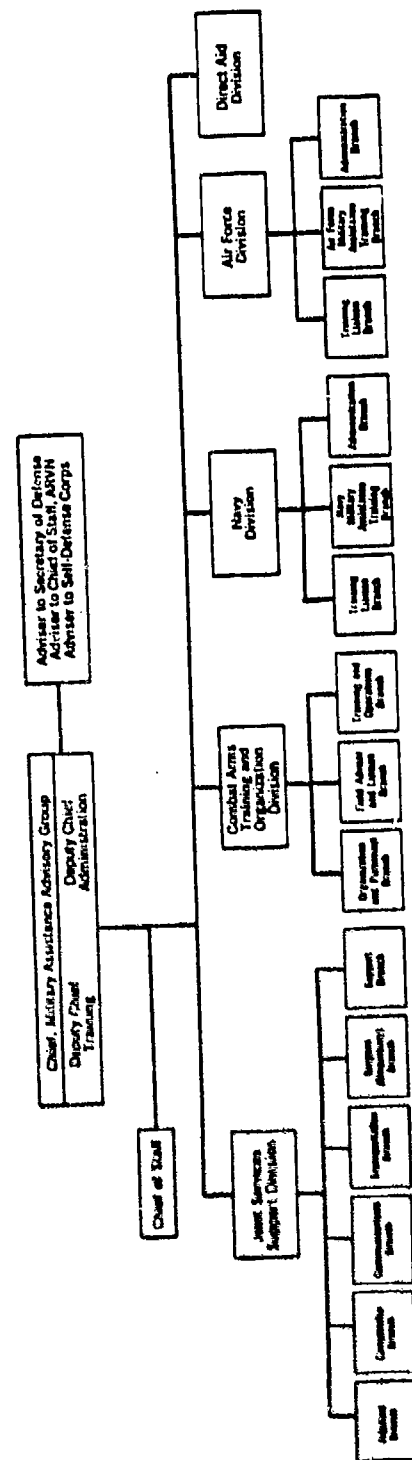
After consultation with and acquiescence of France, the UK, and the concurrence of Canada and India of the ICC, the US established the Temporary Equipment Recovery Mission (TERM) to supervise the recovery and shipment of excess equipment. TERM was established on 1 June 1956 with a strength of 350 officers and men. In addition to the recovery mission TERM's "confidential" task was to aid in developing an effective South Vietnamese logistical system. The formation of TERM under Chief, MAAG increased the US military strength from 342 to 692 officers and men. With 48 additional spaces authorized to allow for personnel in transit, leave, or temporarily out of the country.32/ (See Figure 10-1, Organizational Alignment.)

Although MAAG and TERM were considered separate organizations by external agencies, in actuality, some of TERM personnel were integrated into other MAAG staff divisions and into field advisory attachments. In essence, MAAG/TERM operated as a single unit.33/

TEMPORARY EQUIPMENT RECOVERY MISSION, 1956



MILITARY ASSISTANCE ADVISORY GROUP, VIETNAM, 1956



SOURCE: MG George Eckhardt, Command and Control, 1950-1969, pp. 16-17

Figure 10-1. Organization of MAAG and TERM

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TERM was the logistic element of MAAG and by the end of 1957 devoted the majority of its efforts to logistic training. However, the redistribution of US equipment and the disposal of excess equipment continued through 1958. Maximum use was made of contractors to recover and ship out excess property. Most of the vehicles that needed rebuilding were evacuated to Japanese rebuild facilities and returned to Vietnam. The major logistics thrusts during this period were to:

- Organize the Vietnamese Army along US technical service lines;
- Identify, classify, and determine the disposition of thousands of tons of repair parts left by the French; and
- Establish a maintenance system along US lines from the organization to the depot level.

Civilian contract personnel, most of whom were ex-US military, were utilized to assist MAAG and Vietnamese in the repair parts identification program, in establishing a major maintenance facility, and in providing technical assistance to engineer units in road building programs.

By 1960, the logistics debacle caused by the rapid departure of French from South Vietnam had been largely rectified and the development of viable logistic systems for the Vietnamese armed forces was well under way.

### F. SUPPORTING RVNAF

#### 1. General

A major decision facing the Vietnamese Armed Forces had to do with the type of force structure the relatively new nation required. Of course, the options were limited by the political, economic and social chaos that faced the new leaders and the answer would largely be dependent on the type of threat that developed. The amount and type of US support hinged on that decision. General O'Daniel recommended in 1954 a force structure of 150,000 men that included:

- 4 Field Divisions,
- 6 Light Divisions,

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- 4 Armed Cavalry Regiments,
- 11 Artillery Battalions,
- 13 Territorial Regiments, and
- 6 Regiments of Regional Troops.

The Air Force was to have 1,150 men and the Navy 4,250. General O'Daniel presumed that the above force would be able both to cope with aggression from the North and to provide a force for Internal Security. General O'Daniel's original force structure was based upon the assumption that the French Expeditionary Corps would be available to blunt a North Vietnamese invasion across the DMZ.<sup>34/</sup> The force level was subsequently approved and organized. In addition to the armed forces there were to be two paramilitary forces:<sup>35/</sup>

- A Civil Guard activated in April 1956 with a strength of 68,000 men, and
- A Self-Defense Corps People's Militia, organized in April 1956.

Initially, only the Self-Defense Corps was supported by the US, through the Aid Program.

### 2. The Equipment

The initial source of material for the RVNAF was the equipment left in Vietnam by the French. Except for some vehicles which needed rebuilding, there were more than sufficient on-hand assets to equip the ARVN. The Air Force was equipped with L-1 type light liaison aircraft and C-47 transports. The Navy manned patrol craft and amphibious craft. (LCM, LCVP, etc.), all of which had been left by the French.

### 3. The Standardized Division Structure

By the time LTG Samuel T. Williams assumed duties as Chief, MAAG, the French Expeditionary Corps had departed. General Williams felt that the light division and territorial regiments of ARVN were ineffective combat organizations because of the lack of artillery and inadequate organic combat service support. He felt a standard division of approximately 10,000 men could accomplish the mission of meeting both internal and external aggression. Numerous studies were made and a division structure of 10,450 personnel was adopted for seven divisions in 1959.<sup>36/</sup>

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The standard division structure contained the T/O and E's of all units in the force structure which were developed and became the basis for US national support.. The division contained three infantry regiments, a 105mm field artillery and 4.2" mortar battalions; signal, ordnance, quartermaster, medical, transportation companies; and an engineer battalion. 37/ Thus, the standardized divisions facilitated training, and provided an organic logistic support capability. Conversely these units were not geared to the insurgency threat that existed at that time.

#### 4. Non-Division Logistic Organization

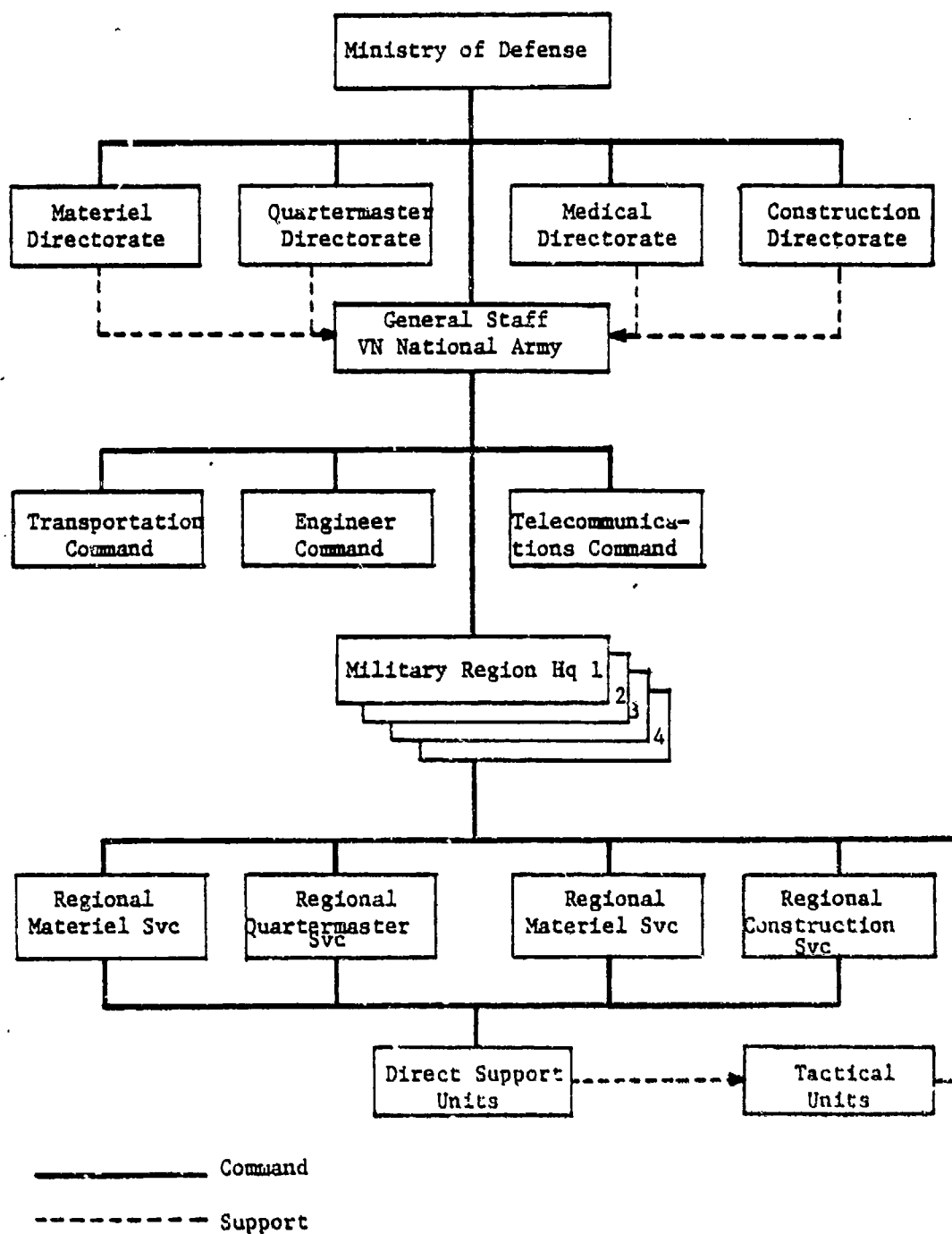
##### a. French Period

The non-divisional logistic structure of the RVNAF evolved from a French-designed and dominated organization of the 1950-1954 period. (See Figure 10-2).

The Vietnamese logistical directorates functioned in coordination with and under the French counterpart directorate of French forces who provided support as required. French domination and control is illustrated by the following extracts from Indochina Authored Refugee Monographs: 38/

- All major functions such as storage, issue, and rebuild were performed by the French Far East Ground Forces Directorate of Material.
- It (Medical Directorate) had no hospitals or medicine storage facilities.
- Vietnamese technical services functioned separately and had an organization of their own, but before 1954 they were all commanded by French officers and the majority of their staff were also French.

After the Geneva Accords, the withdrawal of some French logistical personnel necessitated the integration of Vietnamese cadres into the logistical organization. However, the remaining French personnel were indifferent to their training responsibilities for these cadresmen. Hence, the cadres were left to fend for themselves under adverse circumstances with only on-the-job training.



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SOURCE: Indochina Refugee Authored Monographs, RVNAF Logistics, p. 31

Figure 10-2. Logistical Organization, Vietnamese National Army (Before 1954)

b. US Advisory Period

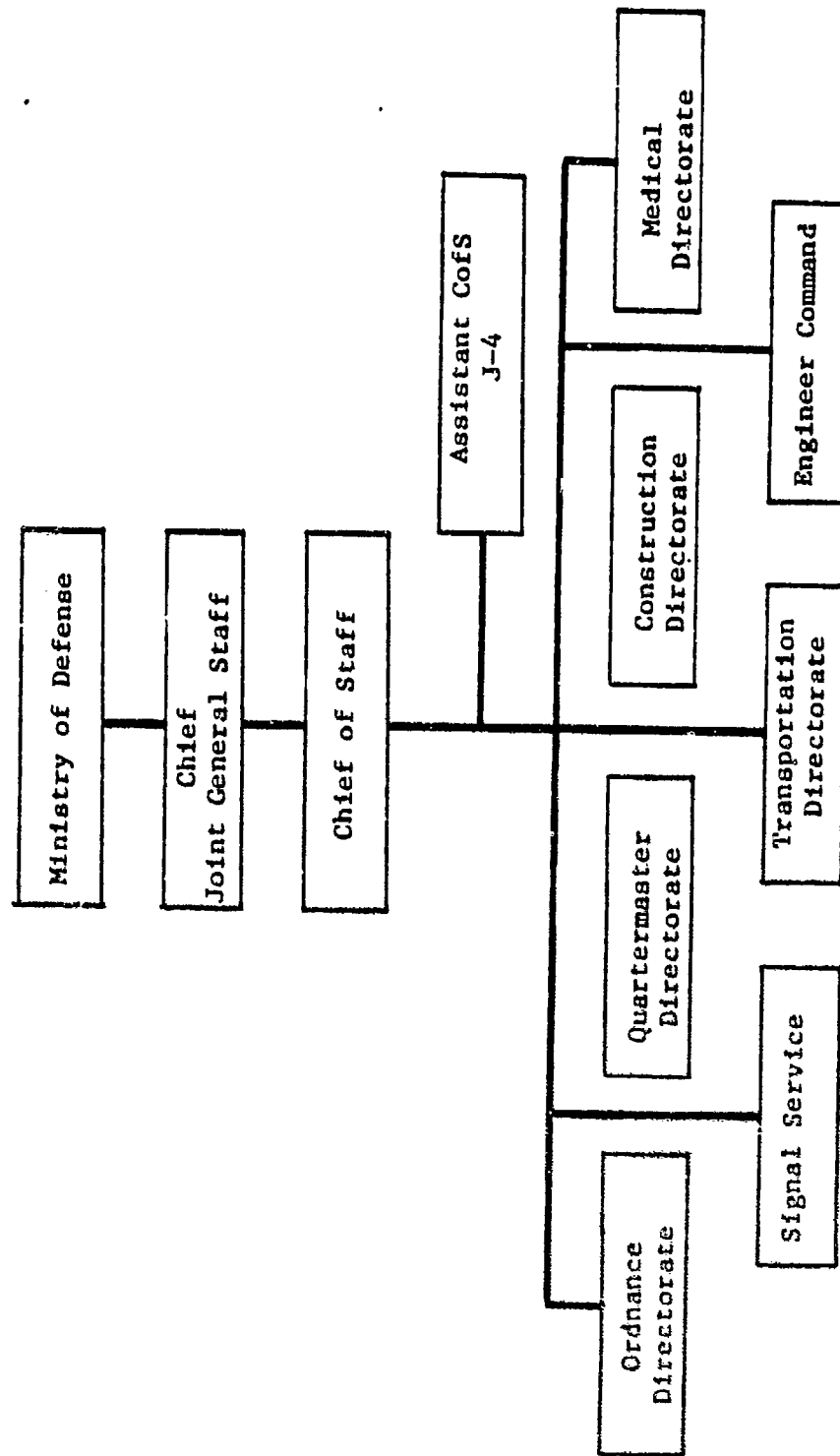
Little progress was made in reorganizing or improving the logistic posture of RVNAF until 1956 when TERM was established. The logistic system was reorganized in 1957, following the US organizational model.<sup>39/</sup> Figure 10-3 depicts this organization.

Technical services were established by the Chief of Staff. The staff and operating agencies had the following responsibilities:

- Ordnance: supply and maintenance of vehicles, weapons, and ammunition
- Quartermaster: food, clothing, individual equipment, fuel, and airdrop material.
- Transportation: responsible for managing and controlling ground and rail transportation and port activities
- Signal: responsible for management of signal material. Signal Service had no operational responsibility. The Signal Command operated fixed and tactical communication. Conflict developed between these two agencies which was only solved by making the same officer head of both.
- Construction and Engineer Command: construction directorate was responsible for all engineer equipment, construction materials and all construction projects while the Engineer Command was responsible for organizing, training and employing combat engineer units, and road building projects in the field.

The technical services controlled the major storage and maintenance depots located mostly in the Saigon area. At the field level, there were field depots and direct support units from each technical service. Initially they were placed under the control of the region G-4. Eventually with establishment of the corps tactical zones (CTZ), five Area Logistic Commands were established for each of the four Corps Zones (See Map 10-2) plus an additional one at Camh Ranh Bay for II CTZ.

In addition to organization of ALCs, a central logistic command was formed in 1964 under the command of the DC/S for Logistics (See Figure 10-4). The purpose of this major reorganization effort was to

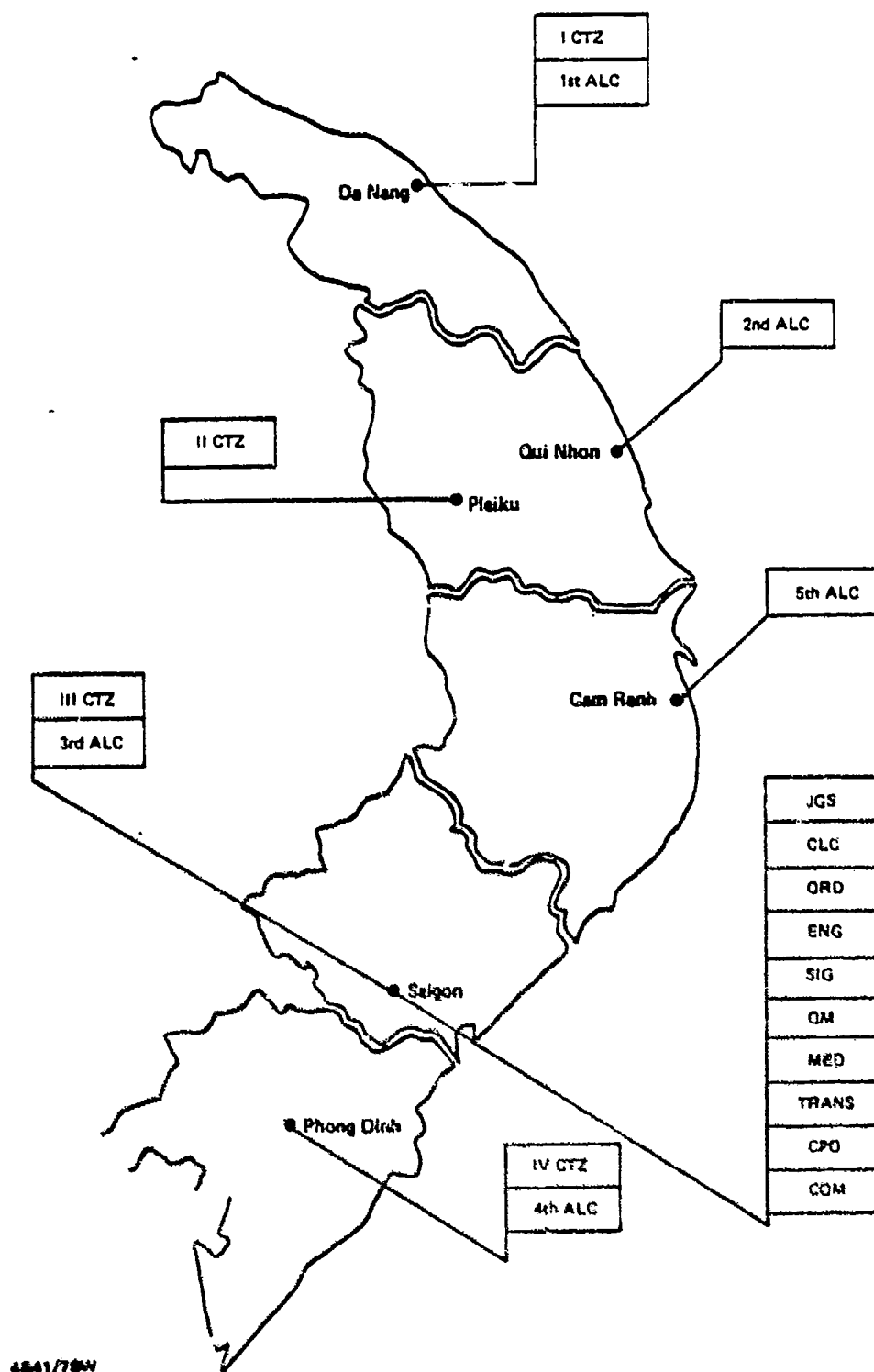


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SOURCE: Indochina Refugee Authored Monographs, RVNAF Logistics, p. 35

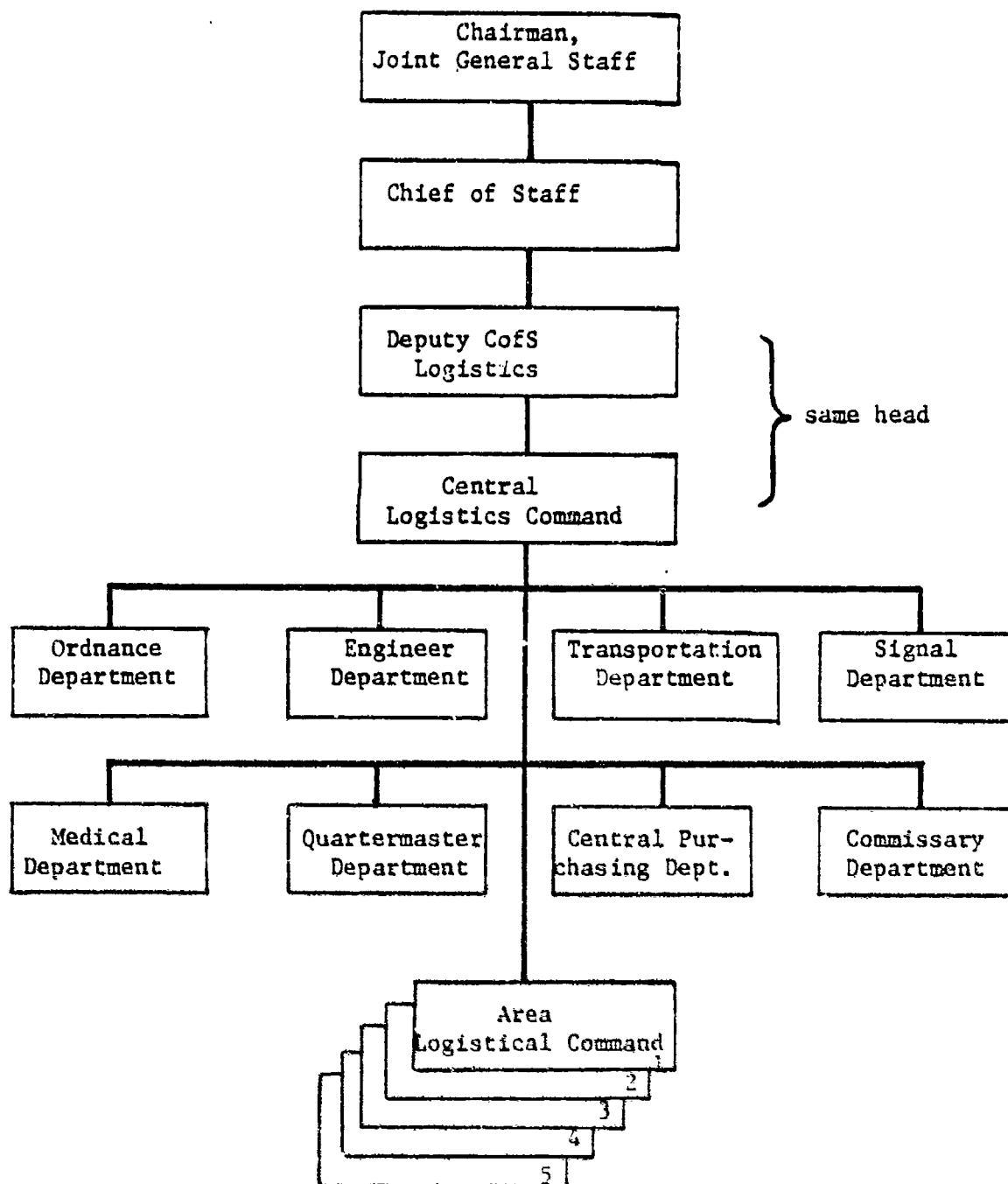
Figure 10-3. RVNAF Logistics Organization, 1957

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SOURCE: Indochina Refugee Authored Monographs, RVNAF Logistics, p. 39

Map 10-2. Location, Logistical Commands, 1968



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SOURCE: Indochina Refugee Authored Monographs, RVNAF Logistics, p. 40

Figure 10-4. RVNAF Logistics System at the End of 1968



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consolidate command and control over logistical efforts at the joint staff level. Each technical service or department performed command functions and the duties of a staff agency.

The common support items for the Navy and Air force were provided by the appropriate technical service. However, the Air Force and Navy controlled their own logistic support for service-peculiar items. Hence, the organizational development of the Vietnamese logistical system in general followed the US technical service concepts prevalent in late 50's and early 60's.

### 5. Supply of RVNAF

#### a. Post French Period

After the French departed, the Vietnamese Armed Forces were equipped with an assortment of US, French, UK, and Japanese military equipment. During the period 1957 to 1959, a major effort was made to standardize the US weapons, communication equipment, and vehicles. Infantry weapons included the M1 rifle, .45 cal. pistol, M1 carbine, Browning Automatic Rifle, 81mm and 4.2" mortar. Equipment included the World War II family of radios and vehicles i.e., 1/4, 3/4, and 2 1/2-ton family. The reconnaissance units were equipped with half tracks, M-8 Armored Cars, and M-24 light tanks. Vehicles which had been evacuated to Japan for rebuild were returned to bring forces up to authorized levels.

During the period 1955-1960, the Vietnamese military obtained their material support from the French leftovers. As the Vietnamese came to use standardized US material with one standard T/O and E for the divisions and each type of support unit, the supply procedures were simplified. The US stock numbering system was adopted and the US system of classification of supplies was utilized. Except for clothing and class I garrison "A" and "B" type rations, military materiel was furnished by the US.

#### b. US MAP Procedures

The funding, response, and material constraints of the Military Assistance Program were alleviated in March 1966 when Congress authorized expenditure of regular Service appropriations in support of Allied forces in Southeast Asia. 40/

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Under this system the US Army supplied funds for the support of the RVNAF. The same procedures were utilized except MACV-opposed requisitions were forwarded to US Army International Logistic Center, New Cumberland Pennsylvania for centralized US Army control, or to US Army Depot, Japan which retained a stock of certain MAP-support items. After procuring, the requisitions were forwarded to the appropriate National Inventory Control Point. Medical supplies support was provided by US Army Medical Depot, Okinawa.

### c. Stock Control

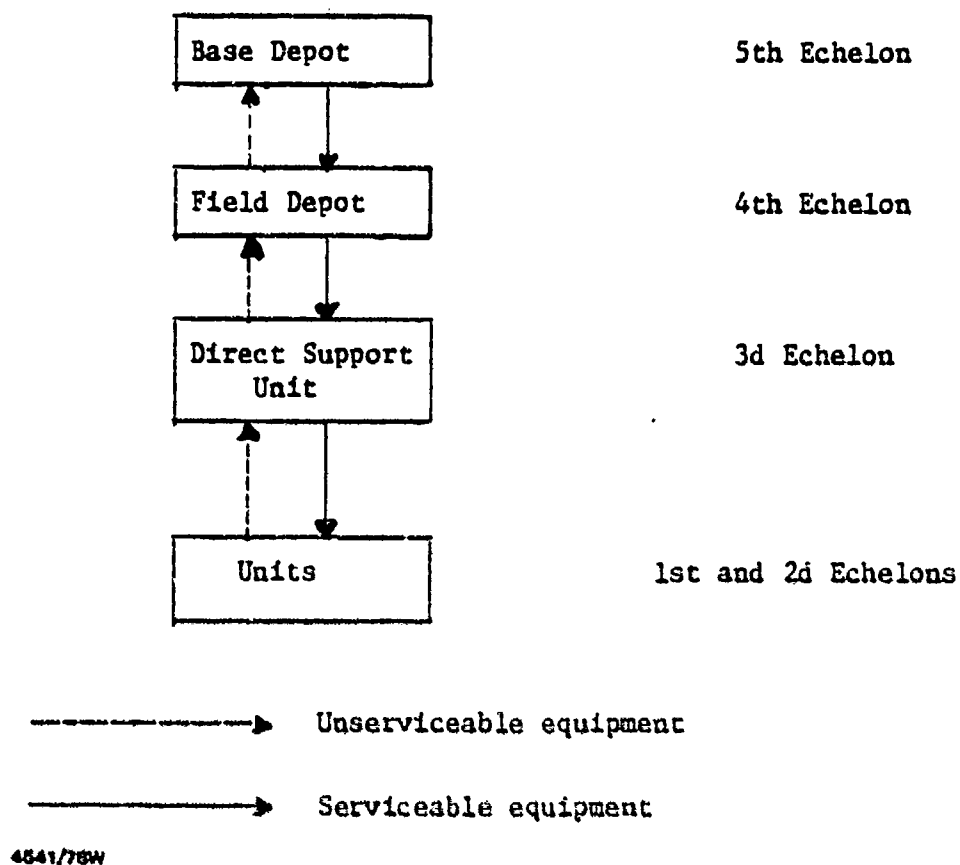
A stock level of 180 days was authorized the RVNAF. Field depot stock level was 60 days and PLL stock level was 15 days. Requisition criteria could be modified if approved by US advisors who were in control of the stock control process. Later on electronic accounting machines were made available to some base depots for the establishment of locator cards, inventories, and requisitions.<sup>41/</sup>

### d. Equipment Modernization of RVNAF

From 1956 until 1964 the RVNAF had been armed with World War II equipment which had become obsolete and difficult to maintain. Eventually, the M-16 replaced the M-1 rifle and the carbines. M-41 light tanks, M113/M114 personnel carriers and the V-100 scout car replaced the World War II armored vehicles. Although initiated in 1964, the modernization was not completed by the time of the 1968 Tet offensive. The equipment utilized by RVNAF was qualitatively inferior to that utilized by US forces in Vietnam until after the Tet offensive. No doubt this factor had a bearing on the combat capabilities of the ARVN between 1959 and 1968. After Tet, the modernization of RVNAF was expedited.

### e. Maintenance in RVNAF

The RVNAF maintenance system was identical to that of the US Army. The system is depicted in Figure 10-5. Initially the maintenance facilities were those used by the French. The depot facilities were relatively modern. However, maintenance proved to be one of the major logistic problems.



SOURCE: Indochina Refugee Authored Monographs, RVNAF Logistics, p. 59

Figure 10-5. RVNAF Maintenance System

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First, the environment in Vietnam was not conducive to good maintenance. Major roads outside of the urban area were nothing more than elephant tracks with huge ruts, wash outs, and fords replacing destroyed bridges. The Vietnamese soldiers were never properly trained as drivers by the French. Vehicles were sustaining damage due to road conditions and lack of adequate evacuation equipment.

In-country rebuild capabilities were practically nonexistent during this period even though TERM had a contract with Vinnell Corporation in 1957 to advise the Ordnance Corps in establishing a rebuild program for vehicles and weapons at the 80th Base Depot in Saigon/Cholon. All major rebuild was performed at US bases in Japan, Okinawa, and Taiwan. In fact, the Vietnamese did not possess the capability to rebuild equipment until 1970.<sup>42/</sup>

The major problem was the retention of a trained work force. Competition for technically trained personnel between military, civil service, and civilian enterprises was quite keen as the high rates of pay drew trained personnel from the low-paid civil service/military establishment. The lack of adequate maintenance continued until the Tet offensive, after which considerable improvement was made.

### 6. Support of Para-Military Forces Prior to 1965

Initially the Civil Guard was not a part of the Defense Ministry. It was supported by the United States Operations Mission (USOM). The Civil Guard was to be an internal security force similar to the state police organizations in the US. It and all other police organizations were advised by a Michigan State University team under a USOM contract. Civil Guard equipment came from various sources including (1) equipment on hand from the days of the French (2) excess equipment (3) US-provided equipment through USOM - mostly "police special" pistols (4) military assistance received from third countries.<sup>43/</sup>

During the early days the Civil Guard was poorly organized. Supplies were procured unsystematically from various sources. Maintenance was ineffective due to lack of clear-cut responsibilities, shortage of

tools, and inadequately trained personnel. From 1956 to 1961 when DOD assumed control of the Civil Guard (then named regional forces) the control of this vital internal security organization was in dispute between President Diem and the US government. As early as 1958 Diem proposed that the Civil Guard be supported by the MAP Program and the MAAG, rather than through USOM's economic program with its relatively weak advisory effort. 44/ His objective was to tailor the CG after the Philippine Constabulary, or Iranian Gendarmerie. In lieu of police specials, he wanted the CG equipped with landing craft (LCVP), tactical vehicles, machine guns, automatic rifles, and M-1 rifles managed by an adequate command and control network. The Guards' primary mission was to be internal security. The Army's primary mission was to be external security, and its secondary mission was that of backing up the Civil Guard in internal security tasks.

The issue remained, should the Civil Guard be part of DOD supported by MAAGV, or should it remain "a State Police force" supported by USOM? This question was not answered until 1960-61, some three years after insurgency began. At that time the Civil Guard was brought under the military assistance program, and incorporated into the Defense Department under the new Director General of Self Defense and Civil Guard. 45/ However, the Civil Guard and the Self Defense Corps were not made a part of the Army until 1965. Hence, the joint general staff had no responsibility for operations or logistics.

In 1965, when the Civil Guard and the Peoples Militia were redesignated Regional Forces (RF) and Popular Forces (PF), they were incorporated into the RVNAF. Finally in 1967 support was provided directly to the Administrative and Logistics Support Companies by the Army's area logistic command.

Logistic support of RF and PF units, the primary counterinsurgency force, was never really satisfactory. Priority was always low in comparison to the RVNAF. Up until 1967, US support was niggardly both in equipment and in advisory personnel. Full support was eventually provided by the US military assistance program through CORDS. However, the logistics support never achieved the effectiveness of that which supplied the RVNAF. 46/

7. Logistic Training of RVNAF

a. Introduction

The logistic training organization, procedures and operations were generally copied after those of the US Army under the technical service organization concept. The US assumed training advisory responsibility from the French in 1956.

b. French Era

The establishment of a materiel training center at Tho Duk was a forerunner of the ordnance school, responsible for training officers and technicians in weapon and vehicles. All training centers were predominately staffed by the French, and all training conducted in French. Between 1949-1954 some Vietnamese officers were trained at military schools in France. These students were carefully selected. The number trained was so small that the results produced were negligible.<sup>47/</sup> It should be noted that in the five-year period, of 253 Vietnamese personnel trained overseas only 98 were from the ARVN. The air force trained 155 men, most of them as aircraft mechanics.

c. The US Advisory Era

Following the Geneva Accords all training facilities in the North were moved to South Vietnam. Emphasis was placed on the training of tactical units, with concurrent emphasis being placed on the development of an expanded and improved South Vietnamese Army Service school and individual training program. This two-fold program did not make much progress until 1957 due to the lack of advisory assistance and the reorganization of the RVNAF force structure.

Although training was impeded in the late 50s by combat operational demands placed on major units, considerable progress was made in training service support units. The engineer groups received excellent on-the-job training building roads under the supervision of MAAGV advisers.<sup>48/</sup> During 1957-58 an Engineer Group was rebuilding the road from Kontum to Moduc through the Quang Ngai province. That road had been closed since the early fifties.

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### d. The ARVN Logistic School System

MAAGV placed great emphasis on the establishment of a viable military school system modeled after that of the US Army. In the logistic area each technical service operated a school to train officers and enlisted personnel in their branch functions. All technical service schools were concentrated at the Thu Duc school complex except for the Signal School, which was located at Vung Tau, and the Medical School, which was in Saigon. In 1957 a Logistics School was established to conduct intermediate and advanced training for logistics managers and conduct research on logistical organizations and policies for RVNAF. After finishing the advanced level course, an officer would become eligible for the 22-week command and general staff college course.

### e. Off-Shore Training

In addition to the in-country school system, there was an extensive program for training ARVN at US service schools. Figure 10-6 indicates the number trained at US Army CONUS logistic schools during period 1955-1970. This off-shore training program from the earliest advisory days received a great deal of command attention both by the Vietnamese government and the MAAGV. Both officers and NCOs participated in the off-shore training program. A wide range of regular and associate courses were utilized in this training. To qualify for off-shore training prospective students were required to take an English language aptitude test to determine their ability to learn English. Candidates were screened by both ARVN and MAAG. Each candidate had to pass a physical examination. Each successful candidate then received seven months of English language training. The total processing time was 15 months. Up through FY 1962, 2,278 personnel were given logistics training. Between FY 1963 and FY 1968 the numbers dropped sharply, until the introduction of the Vietnamization program caused them to swell rapidly. There is little doubt that this program contributed significantly to the improvement of the logistic posture of the RVNAF.<sup>49/</sup> The off-shore training program decreased from 847 students in FY 1972 to 502 in FY 1974 and only 159 students in FY 1975. As this program was MAP funded, the decrease reflected the reduction in

CONUS Schools and Locations	FY	FY	FY	FY	FY	FY	FY	FY	FY	FY	FY
	55-62	63	64	65	66	67	68	69	70		
Engineer - Ft. Belvoir	792	70	30	34	30	36	105	218	21		
Ordnance - Aberdeen PC - Redstone Arsenal	540	50	18	18	15	4	13	26	15		
Quartermaster - Ft. Lee	207	2	2	8	12	15	32	30	19		
Signal - Ft. Monmouth - Ft. Gordon	534	83	20	9	22	66	52	60	70		
Logistic Manage- ment - Ft. Lee, Rock Island		5	1	3	10	22	27	12	8		
Medical - Ft Sam Houston	83	8	3	3	2	9	4	19	15		

SOURCE: LG Doug Van Khuyen, RVNAE, Indochina Refugee Authored Monograph, p. 206

Figure 10-6. ARVN Personnel Trained in US Army Logistics Schools 1955 to 1970



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Vietnam aid. Political considerations sometimes superceded merit as the basis for the selection and assignment of these officers. Despite this inevitable politicization, the program worked well until after the US withdrawal when the luxury of a 15-month English language and logistics training cycle was no longer feasible.

### f. Language Difficulties in Logistics Training

One of the major problems confronting the US advisory effort was the problem of communications between the US and the Vietnamese personnel. The ability to communicate in Vietnamese or French was never a requirement for a US advisor except in some specialized areas. Short advisory tours, the difficulty of translating technical terminology, and the difficulty many Americans experienced learning the tonal Vietnamese language militated against the use of Vietnamese and encouraged the use of English. French was banned as the official language in 1955. President Diem ruled that English would be the new common means of communication in view of the fact that Vietnamese was not a required language for an American advisory assignment. (As a result, in the advisory era each advisor was conducting English classes for the units and activities he was advising. In addition, the Armed Forces Language School, which opened in 1956 and was attended by those personnel programmed for off-shore schooling, had a maximum capacity of 5,000. Although as time passed some advisors were trained in the Vietnamese language prior to arriving in RVN, the overall trend was toward use of English as the basic language of the military. As soon as MAAG assumed the training advisory mission, MAAG VN instituted a major program of translating US technical and field manuals into Vietnamese. This effort was conducted by a large translator pool in the MAAG.

### g. US Forces Training Assistance to ARVN (Post-Tet Period)

During the Vietnamization period the US forces concentrated at all levels on improving the efficiency of the rapidly expanding ARVN. This US force assistance included:

- On-the-job training of RVN personnel in US units; and
- Use of Mobile Advisory teams.

Under the modernization and improvement programs, more complex equipment was being issued to ARVN. Further, automated supply procedures required a

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vast training effort. The first logistical command initiated an on-the-job training program for Vietnamese logistic personnel utilizing US logistic units and personnel as instructors. Engineer and signal commands conducted similar programs. Mobile Advisory teams were primarily to advise the regional and popular forces that were an important element in the pacification program. The teams conducted on-site training of regional force companies and platoons in both operations and logistics.50/

### G. BUILDING AND PROTECTING BASES AND LINES OF COMMUNICATION

#### 1. Introduction

In accordance with established policy, military assistance advisory groups in Southeast Asia in the 1950s were supported by the US Navy. This support in the early days was exceedingly austere. Quarters were provided in leased apartments and tented houses. Field advisors were billeted in leased houses, or US-built, motel-style buildings.

By 1957 the MAAG's logistic support was organized under the Joint Service Support Division which operated the following support facilities:

- A small Navy commissary/exchange which supported the official US military/civilian community.
- A dispensary with two (2) military doctors supported financially by the Embassy. Hospitalization was provided by the US Air Force at Clark AFB with emergency care at French Army-run hospital in Saigon.
- A communication branch operating a terminus of the Army communication system and a local telephone system integrated into the Vietnam to DOD system.
- A Navy-run post office.
- A finance office for service to MAAG personnel.
- A large motor pool providing bus and truck transportation to support the MAAG.

Field advisors were generally supported by an air LOC utilizing a VNAF C-47 which delivered rations and supplies to advisory detachments on

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a monthly basis from Tan Son Nhut airfield in Saigon. Those detachments not accessible by air were supported by a highway LOC. Communications to field advisory units was by other USOM radio or ARVN communications networks. Supplies arrived by commercial sea transport at the Saigon commercial port on a monthly basis. Personnel arriving in Vietnam came by air. By 1970 the US had progressed from relative austerity to a sophisticated logistic support posture, having constructed: 51/

- 7 deep water ports with 27 berths,
- 12 runways at eight major airfields, with 200 small airfields and 200 heliports,
- 11 million square feet of covered storage,
- 1.8 million cubic feet of reefer storage,
- An 8,250-bed hospital capacity, and
- Major tactical bases, communication sites, roads, bridges, POL storage and pipelines, administrative buildings, etc.

Further, major bases were constructed in Thailand for support of operations in Southeast Asia, including:

- Five major air bases,
- A port and depot complex at Sattahip.
- A major supply and maintenance facility at Korat,
- A major road-building program on the LOC, to the airbases in north and east Thailand, and
- A major training center at Kanchanaburi for Thai Army rotational units for service in Vietnam.

On Okinawa, the major off-shore base the overall storage capability was doubled, barracks and administrative buildings were built to house the influx of support troops and the inventory control center with its large computer facility. Further, the port, the hospital, and the communication system were expanded. In Japan a hospital center was activated during 1966 with three general hospitals having a capacity of 3,700 beds of which 2,530 were for Vietnam support. The overall base development in support of Southeast Asia operations was probably the greatest undertaken since World War II. This effort virtually converted an under-developed

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country into a modern agricultural nation with an excellent road network, airports, ports, semi-permanent facilities suited for both military and civilian industrial purposes, and a communication network linked to the outside world by under water cable and satellite communication. Major base development was accomplished in a relatively short period of three years by military engineer units and civilian construction contractors.

The overall infrastructure that was developed to meet the requirements in Southeast Asia posed major challenges to the base developers. Many of the requirements were in the so called "nice to have" category which included base camps with all the facilities of garrison life including PXs, mess halls, administrative and maintenance facilities, chapels, swimming pools, tennis courts, and large administrative headquarters facilities. The question to be examined in this portion of the study are:

- Were the base developments requirements justifiable? What were the alternatives?
- Was the base development planning adequate and timely?
- Were resources adequate and available when required?
- Were planning, programming and procedures adequate to meet a wartime contingency?

### 2. Base Development Effort in the Military Assistance Advisory Era

Major construction efforts occurring during the Advisory Era (1955 to 1965) were devoted primarily to improving the road network in Vietnam and lengthening of the runway at Tan Son Nhut to accommodate jet aircraft. Those construction programs were sponsored by USOM as part of its economic development program.

The road building program had special military significance and LTC S. T. Williams and President Diem were deeply interested in the program. In 1957-1958, President Diem was developing the "implantation" program. i.e., the development of South Vietnamese settlements in the central highlands to form a protective friendly barrier of villages against infiltration by guerrillas from Laos and Cambodia. The program was also intended to open up the relatively undeveloped highlands to agricultural development by the peasants from the low-lands and the Catholic refugees

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from the north. However, this program necessitated emphasis on rebuilding the highway system to the highlands.

The road network into the highlands was extremely limited and in very poor condition by 1957. Map 10-1 depicts the road network during this early period.

In 1967, many of roads indicated as all weather roads were not hard surfaced and had deteriorated due to lack of maintenance since the Geneva Accords and the French withdrawal. Most were single lane with wash board surfaces badly erroded by monsoon rains.

Lieutenant General S. T. Williams, as Chief MAAG VN supported Diem's proposal to place emphasis on rebuilding the highway network into the highlands for military contingency reasons. Specifically, his interest was in Route 9 to Pleiku and Kontum from Qui Nhon, route 21 from Nha Trang to Ban Me Thuot, and route 14 from Ban Me Thuot to Pleiku. Further, Chief, MAAG and Diem strongly felt that a major road should be build from Kontum to Pakse in Thailand across the Bolovens Plateau in Laos. Williams felt such a strategic road would be essential to provide a means for the control of movement down the Mekong Valley.<sup>52/</sup> On the other hand, USOM did not favor placing emphasis on the roads into the undeveloped highlands. They favored development of the road from Saigon to Bien Hoa and then rebuilding Route 1, the coastal highway. General Williams, agreeing with the Route 1 project, felt funding should be redistributed to provide for upgrading the routes 19 and 21 into the highlands. The road-building program during this period became a source of controversy between MAAG, President Diem, and USOM. Apparently USOM did not understand the military justification for the road building program. From an economic point of view they did not feel it was justifiable to build roads into the highlands or to Pakse because the highlands and the Bolovens Plateau had little economic potential for the Vietnamese and Laotians, although some of the largest tea plantations in Vietnam were located in the highlands.<sup>53/</sup> Roads to the highlands were ungraded in 1959/60. By 1970 the road-building program provided for the upgrading of 3,660 kilometers of highways.

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In 1956-1967 USOM proposed a project to upgrade Tan Son Nhut airfield to accommodate commercial jet aircraft which were beginning to come into the airline inventories. MAAG concurred in the military need for the project in that there were no airfields in Vietnam capable of taking jet aircraft. At a country team meeting in 1958, MAAG learned that the funding for this militarily significant program had been suspended some six months before without USOM notifying MAAG. On the other side of the coin, military coordination with the civilian aid activities, both in and out of country, also left much to be desired. These incidents indicated the need for close coordination and cooperation between US foreign assistance activities at both departmental and field level. Construction projects may be primarily of economic concern but they may also have military significance. Hence, responsibilities for relationships between military and civilian activities must be clearly defined in the planning process.54/

### 3. Base Development in the MACV Era

#### a. Base Development Planning

The army's contingency plans for Southeast Asia included base development plans prepared at the theater level. Several such base development plans were completed to support the 32-Yr family of operation plans. The plans addressed specific situations with certain assumptions on US and Vietnamese responses.55/

These plans were very austere in comparison to extensive base development requirements of the post-1965 era. Prior planning called for the establishment of base development project stocks in the far Pacific area. These include POL pipeline material, railway construction stocks, complete equipment for MASH or evacuation hospitals, and barrier material. Projects stocks were stored in Okinawa, Thailand, and Japan together with other project stocks of a non-base development type.56/

Unfortunately the build-up plans initiated in April 1965 necessitated a complete revision of base development plans, as the force build up far exceeded that included in the OPLAN 32-64.

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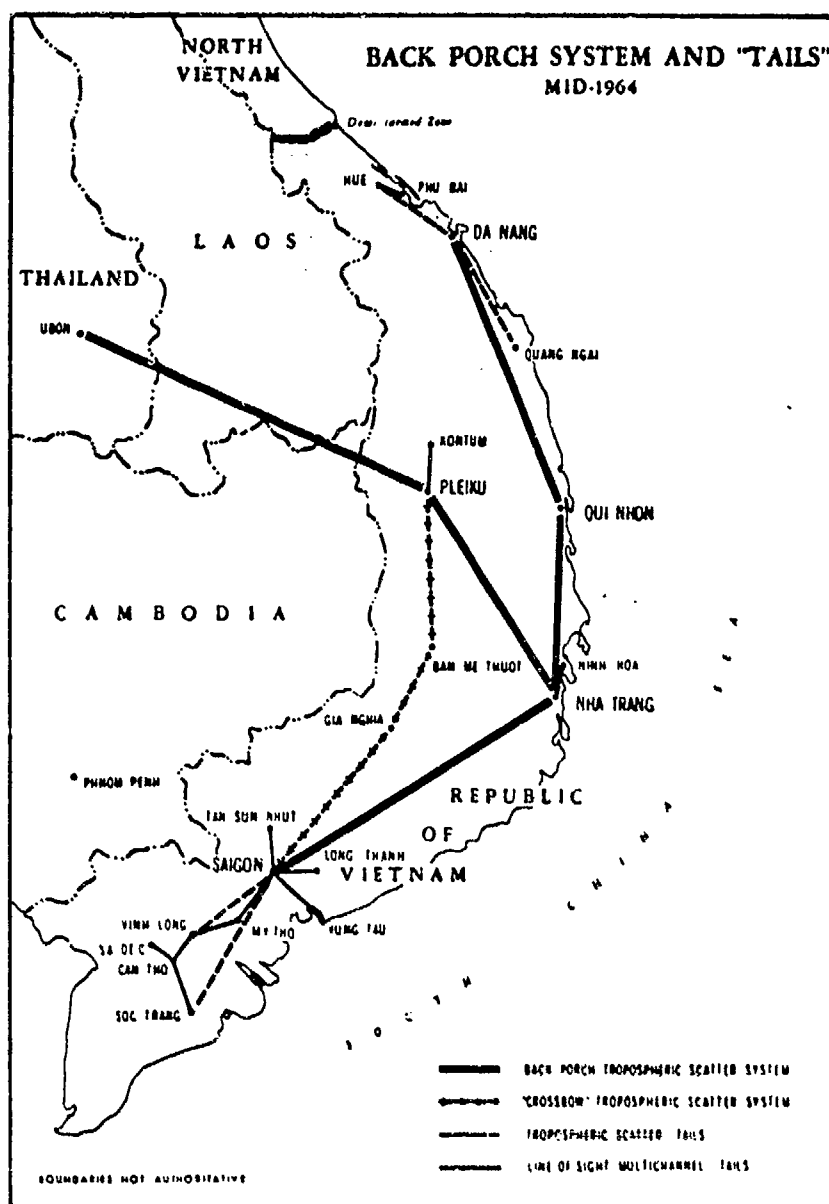
### b. Early Base Development Projects 1962-1965

Although MACV had grown to a US force level of 20,000, US military personnel by 1965, only minor base development had been accomplished. The major program prior to 1965 was the establishment of a long-line communications network in Southeast Asia. A major project was BACK PORCH--a tropospheric scatter system installed under Air Force contract. 57/ (See Map 10-3) From Saigon south to the Delta region, long lines were provided by a microwave system called Southern Toll, funded by the US Agency for International Development (AID). Major communication projects had also been initiated by CINCPAC in 1961 to upgrade communications throughout the WESTPAC area, including the capability for low-speed data transmission from Saigon to Okinawa by high frequency radio and the installation of an undersea cable from Nha Trang to the Philippines, thus connecting with the trans-Pacific cable to Hawaii and the mainland. However, the communication reliability, both in country and out of country, was relatively low until the installation of satellite communications in the late 60s. 58/

### c. Construction Responsibilities

Construction responsibility prior to 1965 had been assigned by DOD to the Navy Bureau of Yard and Docks, later known as the Naval Facilities Engineering Command. This construction responsibility was carried out initially on a civilian contract basis by a contracting officer in Bangkok, and after 1965 in Saigon (OIC construction, Vietnam). 59/

Base development planning on the MACV staff was a responsibility of the J-4. As early as July 1965 when the build up began to accelerate, it was recommended that a separate staff agency directly under COMUSMACV be established to plan and direct the construction effort. It was not until February of 1966 that the position of Director of Construction was established. However, during this period the major base development plan was formulated calling for a two-billion-dollar program to be accomplished in one year. It was also during this period that the initial force buildup of the equivalent of one ROK and three US Army divisions took place. Construction planning was inhibited by the inability of a small



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SOURCE: MG T.H. Rienzi, Communications - Electronics, 1967-1970, p. 14

Map 10-3. Back Porch System, 1964



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engineering staff to handle a program of the magnitude to which the one in the RVN grew.<sup>60/</sup> As a result, during the actual development period, management of the program was initially ineffective. Although the need for effective centralized management had been foreseen in the summer of 1965, it was not until February 1966 at DOD insistence that the Director of Construction was established with an adequate staff to direct and control the base development program.<sup>61/</sup> With establishment of the Director of Construction Office, matters such as priorities of effort, standards of construction, allocation of resources, relationships and area of responsibility between services were resolved at the MACV level. What had been a disjointed program became a unified one.

The Army engineer construction effort was originally a responsibility of the 1st Logistical Command. Upon its arrival, the 18th Engineer Brigade assumed USARV responsibilities for construction to include the function of staff engineer. In 1966 the US Army Engineer Command was formed and assumed USARV engineer staff and construction responsibilities. In 1968 the US Army Engineer Construction Agency was established to manage the construction, real estate, and property maintenance programs. The Office of Engineer, USARV, functioned as the Army Component Engineer. Hence, problems related to construction, base development, real estate, property maintenance, and outside civilian contracting were centered in the construction agency.<sup>62/</sup>

### d. Base Development Requirements

The MACV base development program was designed to support General Westmoreland's concept of operations in which the US forces would abandon the "enclave" strategy and go on the offensive.<sup>63/</sup> Under this concept of operation "every American division and separate combat brigade was to build a base camp, in effect a home station, which was essential for such rear echelon functions of the division as record keeping and maintaining reserve supplies. Although tents were to be used at first, each camp eventually was to have some permanent low-cost frame buildings. However, General Westmoreland stated that he "had to keep a constant vigil to

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insure that the camps remained relatively austere."<sup>64</sup>/ Thus the requirement was established to build a series of base camps for the combat and support forces that made available a garrison life style to all the forces in Vietnam. The combat forces (infantry and artillery) spent most of their time on operations. On a visit to Phan Rang in 1967, General Westmoreland expressed concern about the extent of new construction underway for the units of 101st Airborne Division. Most of the construction was found to be unnecessary in that the division was in the field constantly. A base development review was conducted and the base camp program was curtailed. Instead of a base camp billet for every man, the size of the cantonments would be determined by the number of personnel occupying it on a continuous basis.<sup>65</sup>/ The result of this curtailment was the creation of an excess stock of construction material already in Vietnam or enroute thereto. These excesses included urinals, toilets, garrison-type kitchen equipment, plumbing supplies, electrical wiring and fixtures of all types, hardware, and other construction supplies. Most of these were non-federal stock numbered items. Some were in the Army depots or on the inventory of the construction contractors. All was government owned. The supplies were part of the excesses that received much attention at all levels after 1967. In addition to the excess construction materials, furnishings for the facilities and maintenance supplies already in the pipeline were excess to the new requirements. These included cots, mattresses, day room furniture, paint, light bulbs, commercial telephones, desks, wall lockers, and other furnishings of garrison type.

Another policy of COMUSMACV which had an influence on the magnitude of the base development program was the morale facility requirement. General Westmoreland's policy on the subject is clearly indicated in his book A Soldier Reports, quoted below:

Once the early crisis of supply had passed, creature comforts were nevertheless a conscious part of the supply effort. Concerned about the effect of superimposing thousands of free-spending Americans on South

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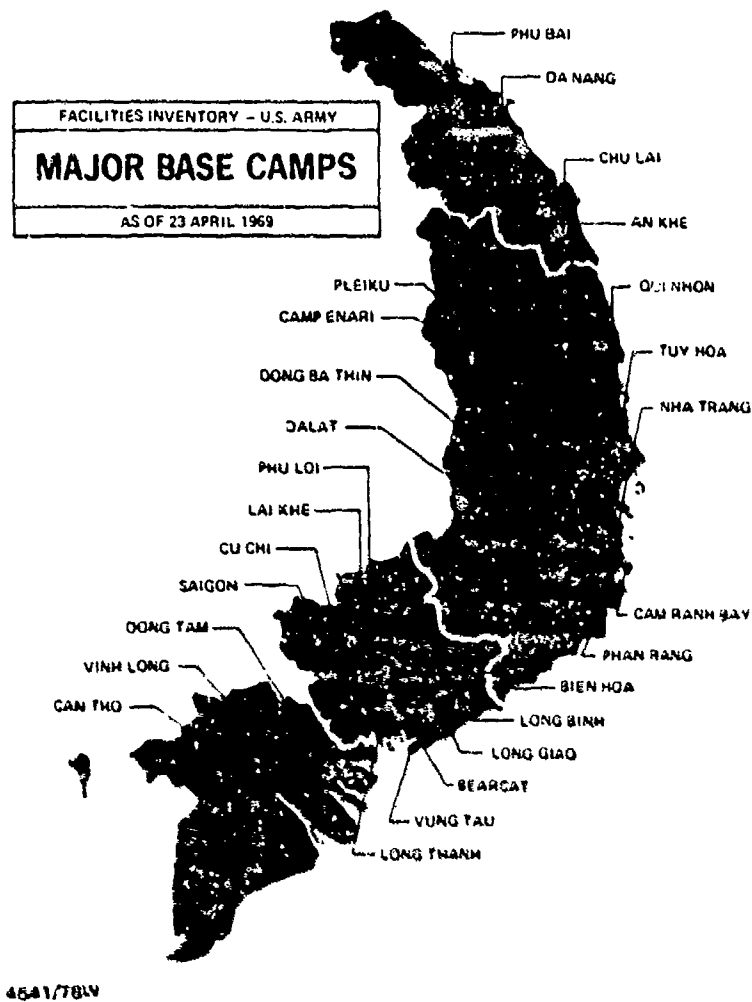
Vietnam's tremulous economy, I tried to provide facilities that would keep American soldiers and their dollars on their bases and out of the towns and cities. A well-stocked PX, occasionally steak for dinner and ice cream for dessert, volley ball courts, and a few swimming pools -- those might make a good copy for a newspaperman or a Congressman looking for something to criticize.

The above policy not only created additional facility requirements but generated supply requirements unknown to the logistician in previous wars. Unit officer and enlisted clubs were required. Even tennis courts were constructed. These facilities generated supply requirements for items such as pizza ovens, popcorn machines, gym mats, refrigerators, deep freezes, and pianos; all of which eventually appeared as excess supplies on Okinawa after being retrograded from Vietnam. Chapels were built at each base camp with chapel supplies and equipment equal to that at any stateside garrison chapel. Without doubt, US forces had not been provided a higher standard of living in any war than in the eight years of the major ground commitment to operations in Vietnam. Map 10-4 shows the extent of the major base camp program.

#### 4. Facilities Engineering and Its Relationship To Base Development

##### a. Introduction

Base development in Vietnam created large physical plants which required a major facilities engineering support effort to keep the facilities operating effectively. This included: maintenance and repair of buildings, roads, and grounds; fire prevention; water purification; trash removal; rodent and smut control; maintenance of equipment; supply of maintenance material; and operation of all utilities. In garrison, facilities engineering is accomplished by the post engineer activity, mainly a civilianized activity in a peacetime environment. In wartime such support in the combat theater was normally provided by Engineer Utilities Detachments. These units are found predominately in Reserve components.



SOURCE: LTG Dunn, Vietnam Studies, Base Development, 1965-1970, p. 135

Map 10-4. Major Base Camps

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### b. Inadequate Planning

Contingency planning for operations in Vietnam had not, in any of the joint service plans, developed a requirement for facilities engineering forces. As a matter of fact the JLRB indicated there was a paucity of information regarding the early recognition of requirements pertaining to the maintenance of facilities. 66/

### c. Contractor vis a vis Military

The Army, with the majority of the utilities detachments in the Reserve components and a completely civilianized civil service facilities engineer structure in CONUS was forced, due to failure to call up the Reserve components, to rely primarily on contract support in this vital maintenance area. On the other hand, the Air Force facilities engineering forces were predominately military due to the significant number of military utilized by the Air Force in facility engineering in peacetime. The base civil engineer squadron is an integral part of the Air Force wings and deploys with the wing. Further, the Air Force maintains Red Horse Squadrons (heavy maintenance and reinforcements), both in the active and reserve forces to augment base level civil engineering efforts. In addition there are PRIME BEEF teams to augment base engineering for specific projects. The Navy, although experiencing a shortage of personnel, was better off than the Army in that SEABEES were assigned directly to the Public Works Department of the Naval Facility and supervised service contract personnel.

As early as 1963, Pacific Architects and Engineers (PA&E) was providing facilities engineer support to six advisor sites with 264 personnel. With the rapid buildup the Army had no other viable alternative then to call PA&E to provide facilities engineering support. By 1968, using a cost-plus-fixed-fee contract initially and subsequently a cost-plus-award fee, the PA&E force grew to 24,000 personnel at 120 locations. 67/ This was the equivalent of two engineer brigades. The force contained a small US element in supervisory and management roles and the remainder were Vietnamese and third country nationals, including a high percentage of Koreans and Filipinos. However, a hardcore of about 1,500 engineer troops were mobilized, serving as utility detachments for fire fighting and water supply teams.

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### d. Civil Service vs Contractor Personnel

There are decided advantages to using contractors over civil service personnel. Contractors have greater flexibility in hiring and firing personnel. They don't have to abide by the inflexible Civil Services regulations. Contractors do not have personnel ceilings to constrain them. A contractor possesses greater flexibility in expanding the work force quickly. However, there are disadvantages to a contractor work force. Their reliability under combat conditions, such as in a guerrilla environment is questionable. A contractor work force is subject to work stoppages caused by strikes and slow downs. A civilian work force, particularly of local and third country nationals, is subject to high rates of absenteeism due to the impact of the political/military environment. Total dependence on civilian personnel, who were subject to local laws and military restrictions, proved to be ineffective in Vietnam. Planning for the future must consider two alternatives:<sup>68/</sup>

- Total military force, or
- Military/civilian mix as the situation dictates.

### e. Development of a Mobilization Base

Current Army policy fails to provide for adequate flexibility in meeting facility engineer force requirements for contingency operations in less than a total mobilization. The Army "must provide a sufficient number of military personnel trained in facilities maintenance functions in its active duty structure to provide an adequate nucleus to support contingency operations."<sup>69/</sup> The Air Force system would appear to be applicable for Army use.

## 5. Contractual Effort

### a. Extent of Contract Construction Effort

RNK (Raymond, Morrison and Knudsen) had been operating in RVN under OICC contract since 1962 when it was awarded contracts for a total of \$21.5 million worth of construction. By 1965 the scope of work had increased to \$155.4 million and by March 1967 to \$650.8 million. This

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growth in requirements necessitated the expansion of the joint venture by the addition of Brown and Root and J. A. Jones Construction Company to the construction effort. During this vast increase in the construction effort, the contractor mobilized a work force of 51,000 persons and 5,260 pieces of construction equipment valued at some \$109 million. By October 1, 1966, a total of 38 projects had been authorized by MACV with an obligation authority of \$823 million.70/

Some of the more tangible measures of output cited by the Navy are as follows:71/

- A 10,000-foot aluminum mat expedient runway at Cam Ranh Bay completed in 66 days.
- Light aircraft and helicopter airfield Da Nang East completed in three months.
- Permanent concrete or asphalt runways delivered at Phan Rang, Da Nang, Chu Lai, and Cam Ranh Bay.
- Completion of four berths at Da Nang and two at Saigon, 10 LST ramps, and 2,000 linear feet of barge off-loading space throughout the country.
- Completion of 6,255,000 cubic meters of dredging in support of waterfront and other landfill operations.
- Housing for 80,000 troops completed in 1966 with work partially completed on facilities for another 145,000.
- More than 2.5 million square yards of airfield pavement delivered with another 3 million partially completed.
- Over 1 million barrels of petroleum, oil, and lubricants storage turned over for use along with 3.8 million square feet of ammunition and covered space.

### b. Contractor Problem Areas

The contractors faced many unfavorable conditions in accomplishing the construction tasks in RVN. Many of these would be problem areas to be faced in future base development in underdeveloped/developing

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countries. Some of the obstacles that hindered the construction effort were:

- Limited skilled work force necessitating importation of third country nationals and requiring delicate diplomatic arrangements.
- Unique engineering problems involving port construction at Danang and Saigon.
- Changing criteria and sitings.
- Work sites exposed to hostile action.
- Isolated sites requiring establishment of a contractor logistic support system before construction could begin.

### c. Loss of Effective Management Control

As a result of the rapid acceleration of the contractor's scope, construction effort was required to depart from normal operating procedures and a certain amount of waste and inefficiency could be expected. However, it appears that there was complete abandonment of all normal processes during the period of escalated mobilization (circa 1965/1966) which created many problems which might have been minimized by the exercise of appropriate degree of management control. 72/

### d. Procurement Practices

Problem areas in which management control improvements could have been made, included the following:

- Use of restrictive specifications and requirements for brand name items, seriously reducing competitive procurement.
- Control by contracting officers over contractors was practically nonexistent, resulting in the purchase of unnecessarily high quality material, failure to use government NICPs as sources of supply, and putting forth unnecessarily large procurement, particularly of lumber, thus forcing a price rise.
- Failure to use BUSH program overruns (BUSH - "Buy United States Here") contributing unfavorably to balance of payments and increasing order and ship time and costs.



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- Failure to use barter procedure to purchase supplies such as cement, plywood.
  - e. Supply Control and Storage Procedures
- The Contractor made limited use of the Government supply system. Many items purchased were not federally stock numbered, hence supply control was made more difficult.
- The Contractor lacked an effective supply control system, storage procedures and facilities to meet the accelerated program.
  - f. Security
- Security was inadequate, particularly at storage facilities. Due to a lack of auditable stock records it was impossible, according to GAO, to determine the extent of losses due to theft although it is believed to be considerable.
  - g. Excess Supplies and Equipment

Even prior to the curtailment of the construction program by COMUSMACV in 1967 some \$32.9 million worth of equipment, materials and supplies already purchased by contractors was in excess of that needed to complete assigned projects.<sup>73/</sup> Some of the excesses resulted from the transfer of construction responsibility from the OIUC to the Air Force for the Tuy Hoa airbase. However, redistribution and utilization of excesses in the following year's program is said to have eliminated these excess supplies and equipment.

However, in late 1967 and early 1968 vast quantities of excess construction supplies had been retrograded to Okinawa, to include electrical equipment, wash basins, urinals of all types, telephone poles, toilet seats, prefabricated buildings, pipe and various other items of construction supplies. Further, in 1969/70 at the closeout of the contractor storage facilities, more construction material, most of which was non-standard, was found. It was difficult to identify and classify this material and consequently it could not be redistributed to government agencies. Most of it eventually was sent to property disposal for sale. Normally, sale by the Property Disposal Office resulted in the government recovering only 10 cents on the dollar.<sup>74/</sup>

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### h. Shipping

The large amount of surplus materials and equipment purchased in the US necessitated a large export shipping capability. Nearly a million tons of cargo was shipped to RVN up until July 1966. Most was shipped through four major naval ports. Five thousand tons was shipped by air. Major problem areas were:

- o Contractors did not utilize the MTMTS for routing cargo from supplies to ports.
- o There was questionable use of air transportation, not only were obvious low priority cargos shipped by air, but contractors utilized commercial air instead of military airlift to ship air cargo at a much higher tariff.

### i. Use of Multiple Contractors Wasteful 75/

The contractual construction effort in RVN utilizing the joint venture concept was designed to be the most economical method of operation. Further, it was operated by one service (the Navy) to meet all US agency requirements. However, at the peak of RMK-BRJ mobilization in May 1966, DOD made an exception to its single contractor plan and authorized the Air Force to contract separately to build the Tuy Hoa Air Base.

Supposedly, the justification was urgency of need, and the alleged inability of the Navy to accomplish the TURN KEY operation in the time required. GAO investigation, however, indicated that the Navy contractor (RMK-BRJ) had excess capability to meet the requirements. DOD, despite GAO funding and the Navy's view point, permitted the Air Force to construct this \$52 million air base utilizing another contractor. There is little doubt this divergence from policy added considerable costs to this project. The added costs were:

- o Duplicate equipment purchased worth some \$7.4 million
- o Premium price paid for equipment which was bought from third parties non-competitively instead of through government NICD or from manufacturer.
- o Paid double the rate paid on other cost type contracts.
- o Duplicative administrative overhead costs ran to 1.9 million dollars.

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### 6. Construction Material

The construction stocks in theater and in CONUS were inadequate to support the massive build up in 1965. Difficulties in planning that had plagued the determination of force composition and base development requirements also deterred the accurate forecasting of construction material during the period when the supply pipeline was being established.<sup>76/</sup> Hence, material was shipped on the basis of "best estimates." This procedure filled the pipeline and permitted construction to be accomplished, but it also created excesses and millions of dollar worth of supplies which could not be accounted for because of the inability of the services and contractors to receive, store and adequately control in-coming material. As late as 1971, RMK-BRJ, the major construction contractor was unable to account for \$120 million of the \$645 million worth of material imported to RVN in 1965-1966 to the satisfaction of GAO.<sup>77/</sup>

Eventually, as conditions stabilized the supply was based upon demand resulting from firm projects. The initial supply fiasco demonstrated the need for an advanced base depot, in the case of RVN, off-shore with balanced Class IV stocks which could be "called forward" as needed thus precluding the flooding of the theater ports with low priority and bulky cargo.<sup>78/</sup> During the period 1968-1970 utilizing open-end contracts this system was instituted utilizing Okinawa and Taiwan to supply RVN with plywood, cement, tar products, pallets, etc.<sup>79/</sup>

The base development effort in RVN indicated the need to establish project stocks of:

- Functional components;
- Long-lead time materials for airbase and water terminal construction such as landing mats, mobile pre-fabricated piers, and power barges; and
- Pre-engineered, pre-fabricated relocatable facilities.

All the above should be positioned in the theater to reduce construction effort and increase responsiveness.<sup>80/</sup>

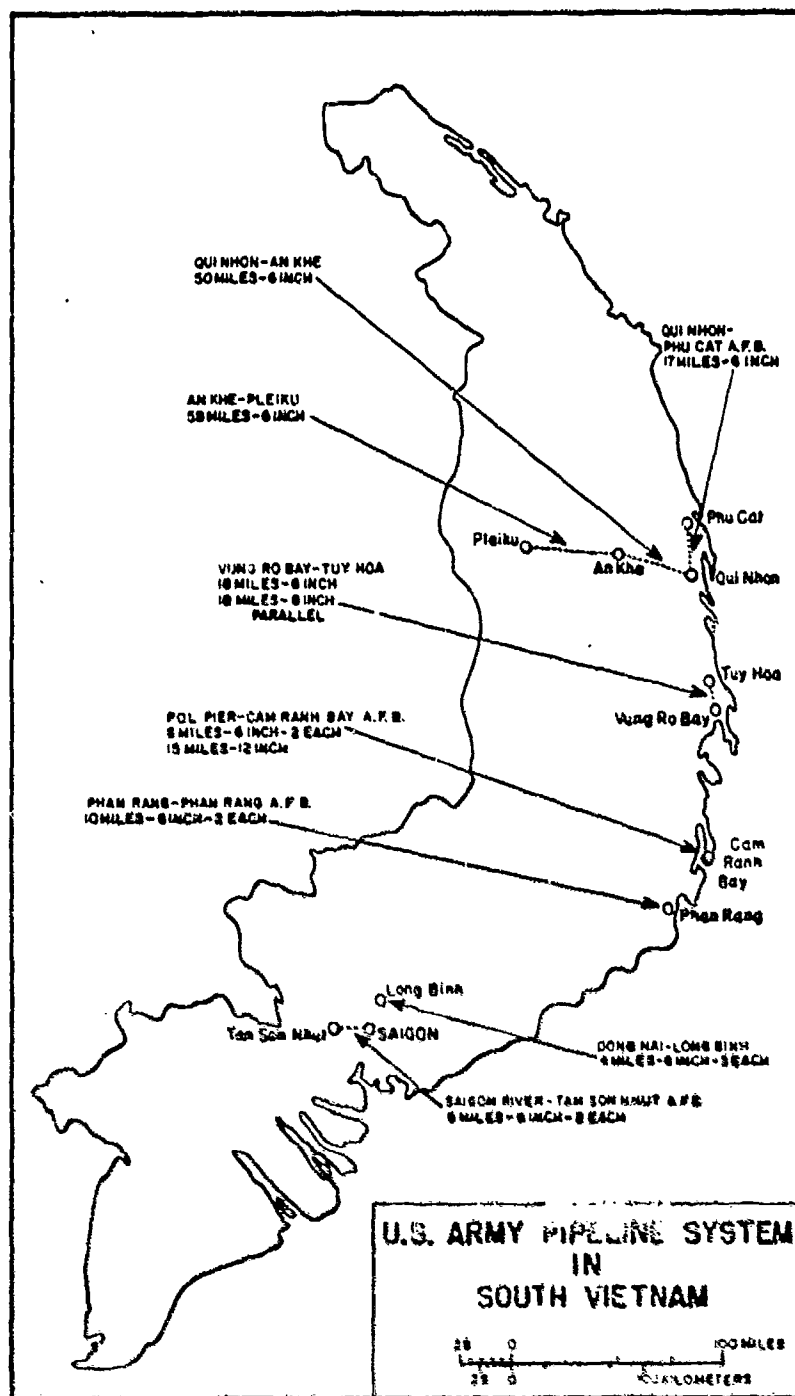
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### 7. Bases and LOC Security Resulting from Base Development Program

The magnitude of the base and cantonment plan had a severe impact on the facilities and LOC security. Each installation was basically an island in enemy territory throughout most of the war. Always subject to Viet Cong mortar, rocket, or sapper attack. A considerable amount of man power was required, particularly at night, to man the defensive perimeters of the logistic bases and cantonment areas. This security requirement impinged on the operational capabilities of the combat and logistic units. As an example, it was not unusual to find a maintenance unit small-arms repair section with 1/3 of its authorized available strength committed to guard duty. Further, many of the cantonments were white elephants that burdened the combat force with security tasks which reduced the unit's capability to accomplish its primary mission.81/

Maintenance of security of the land lines of communications is a major problem that must be faced in any hostile environment. Vietnam was the first major war in which we had to fight to maintain our land lines of communication throughout hostilities. A major problem was security of pipelines, and, as a result, pipelines were used in Vietnam to transport POL only for short distances. Map 10-5 reflects the POL pipeline system in RVN. The Army was successful in operating this system except the Qui Nhon-An Khe-Pleiku line where losses ran as high as 2.5 million gallons/month due to enemy action. As a result, the pipeline was abandoned in 1969. The important lesson to be learned here is that if assets are not available to protect and secure a pipeline (although it can be easily repaired), it is more efficient to resupply fuel by truck, rail, and barge.82/

Attacks on convoys were quite prevalent during the 1965-1970 time frame necessitating the diversion of combat effort for protection. However, much of the logistic convoy protection was provided by military police and transportation truck company personnel. Expedients such as the use of armored jeeps, with .50 cal. machine guns, armored cabs on 5-ton trucks, and M113 bodies carried on 5-ton trucks were utilized on the Qui Nhon-Pleiku LOC.



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SOURCE: LTG Heiser, Logistic Support, p. 78

Map 10-5. US Army Pipeline System in South Vietnam

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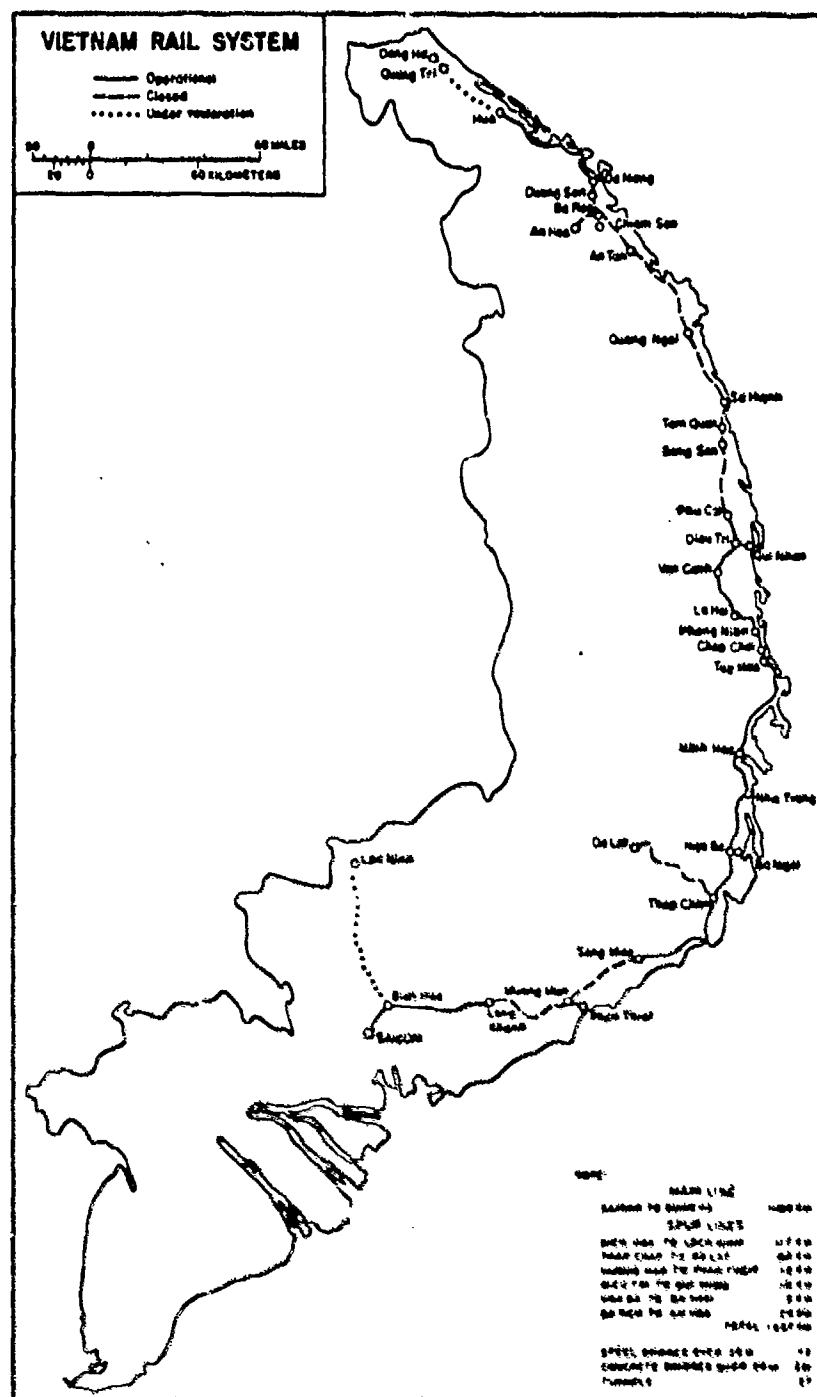
The Vietnam National Railway system originated in Saigon. At one time it served the entire coastal area to Hanoi. As a result of World War II and the Second Indochina War, only that portion of the railroad from Saigon to Nha Trang and Daiat had been restored to service by 1957. By 1960 the system within RVN was operating both scheduled freight and passenger trains on much of the line. Considerable effort was expended in the period 1960-1964 to upgrade the entire system with modern rolling stock, diesel locomotives, modern shop facilities, and maintenance of way equipment. Typhoons in 1964 did considerable damage to the system and, combined with unabated Viet Cong sabotage, resulted in severing the system, in many places, thus restricting operations. In 1966, with US AID support, reconstruction was again attempted. By 1971 nearly 60% of the main lines and branch lines were in use. The status of the system in 1971 is indicated in Map 10-6. The use of the rail system in the Saigon area reduced truck traffic in the congested urban/ suburban area, particularly from the Saigon port to Long Binh complex and the Thu Duc area. <sup>83/</sup> In an insurgency environment railroads, like pipelines, require large security forces which in themselves cannot prevent the lines from being severed. Under such conditions highway convoys or air transport offer the most secure means for providing needed resupply. <sup>84/</sup>

### H. THE US WAY OF WAR (1955-1968)

#### 1. Early Logistic Support Fragmented

Until 1965 logistic support in Vietnam had been fragmented. The Army provided USARV forces with class II and IV items which were peculiar to the Service, class V (ammunition), and direct support maintenance of vehicles, armaments, and calibration devices. The remainder of the logistic support was provided by the Navy, which had been designated in the 1950's as the executive agent responsible for supporting Military Assistance Advisory Groups and Missions in Southeast Asia.

US Army Ryukyus, on Okinawa, was the off-shore base command charged with supporting US Army forces in RVN. Requisitions were submitted



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SOURCE: LTG Heiser, Logistic Support, p. 165

Map 10-6. Vietnam Rail System

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there on a fill or pass basis. In addition, all equipment requiring maintenance beyond the direct support capability in country was retrograded to Okinawa.

Concurrently with the formation of the Military Assistance Command, Vietnam in 1962 the need for a centralized logistic organization was foreseen by the Commander, General Paul D. Harkins. His request for a logistic organization was not favorably considered by CINCUSARPAC or CINCPAC. They felt that such an organization was unjustified at the time, although the military strength, predominantly Army, had risen from 3,200 to 11,300 during 1962. 85/

Not until August of 1964 when the strength had nearly doubled did J-4, MACV revive the idea that a US Army logistic command and an engineer construction capability were required to meet current and future logistic support requirements. Although the JCS endorsed the plan in December for deploying a logistic command headquarters and an engineer construction group, Secretary McNamara only approved the plan in principle and requested additional justification, particularly for the engineer force. Finally, after receiving the blessing of a DOD team sent to RVN to study the request, the 1st Logistic Command was activated on 1 April 1965 in Vietnam with an authorized strength of 350 personnel and the mission of providing all logistical support to US forces less that peculiar to the other Services. 86/

During this pre-1965 period the US Army logistic organization was completely inadequate to the task at hand. The arrival in RVN in December 1961 of the first US Army aviation units increased dramatically the need for an adequate logistic support organization. To meet the mounting requirement the Commanding General, US Army Ryukus Islands (CGUSARYIS) deployed an 11-man logistic support team to Vietnam, but it contained barely enough personnel to provide liaison duties, or to hand-carry requisitions to Okinawa. By 1962 this support organization expanded to 323 personnel and became USARYIS Support Group (Provisional). This command, initially subordinate to USARPAC, was predominantly a logistic headquarters which subsequently evolved into the Army component (USARV) of the unified command, MACV.



The basic logistic organization and operations of MACV during this early period were inadequate to meet the then-current logistic requirements and possible future contingencies. In sum, during this 1962-1965 period the logistic system had failed to keep pace with the rapidly expanding and increasingly complex support requirements. 87/

2. The Move to Centralization in Army Logistics (1962-1965)

Since the days of Elihu Root in the early 1900s, there had been a number of unsuccessful attempts to reorganize the logistical structure of the US Army. Only during the great wars was a centralized control placed over the bureaus or technical services as they were later known. 88/ After World War II, the Army Service Forces, which had provided a centralized control agency over the technical services in World War II, was inactivated. Until 1962 there were continuing efforts to bring the technical services under centralized control. DOD was established as a command and staff layer over the Services. Unification of logistics was taking the form of single management of commodities. Further, single management of sealift, strategic airlift, and land traffic was established. All indicators pointed to greater authority over logistic operations by DOD and JCS. 89/ The overall trend was toward functionalization rather than commodity orientation in structuring the logistic organization. Further, DOD continued to eliminate duplication within and between the Services.

In 1961 the McNamara "revolution in organization" began in the Defense Department. The mission or program budget system was adopted. Project-100 resulted in the formation of the Defense Supply Agency (DSA) with the mission of operating a wholesale supply system for common items. DSA took over from eight (8) commodity single managers and numerous Defense service agencies previously established. 90/

Probably, the most revolutionary of Secretary McNamara's study projects (as it eventually turned out) was the one referred to as Project 80 - the study of the Organization, Functions and Procedure of the Department (the Hoelscher Committee). That study resulted in the activation of Army Materiel Command (AMC) in August 1962. AMC assumed control over 250 installation and activities with over 189,000 people. Its inventory of

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weapons and equipment was \$23.5 billion and its annual expenditures were approximately \$7.5 billion dollars. Subordinate commands included a supply and maintenance command collocated with AMC in Wasington, a test and evaluation command and five commodity commands: weapons, missiles, munitions, electronics, and mobility. During the period 1962 to 1965 there was a personnel reduction in AMC of 25,000 personnel due to base closures, transfer of functions, improved productivity and budget cuts. 91/ By 1965 the wholesale logistic system of DOD was still in a state of flux. Item management continued to be in a state of change with individual commodity management moving from one agency to another. Of greater significance to the Army was the fact that the logistic field organization was still in a technical service configuration. The proposed functionalized organizations of the Combat Service to the Army (COSTAR) concept was not ready for implementation. Hence, training was hampered and doctrine and procedures for interfacing between retail and the wholesale logistic system was unclear.

### 3. Army Logistic Posture (1 January 1965) 92/

#### a. Forces

The Army on January 1965 had a strength of 970,000 personnel with 58% in the CONUS and the remainder overseas. 62% of the active Army personnel were in operating forces. In CONUS were eight divisions and a armored cavalry regiment (ACR) with supporting forces. The operating forces in CONUS were unbalanced, lacking logistic forces these were to be provided by the Reserves in the event of mobilization. Additionally, most of the logistic support in garrison was provided by post, camp, and station civilianized supply and maintenance activities.

#### b. Materiel

The materiel posture of the Army was significantly below that required by DOD logistic guidance. Of significance was the following:

	<u>Requirements</u>	<u>On Hand</u>
Principal Items	\$23.58	\$158
Secondary Items Depot Assets (Including Stock Funded)	3.98	1.4

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Although in ammunition there were \$5 Billion in assets on hand against a \$4.5 billion requirement, only 51% of the ammunition available were applicable assets. As an average only 59% of the assets were applicable to the total requirement.<sup>93/</sup> Many of the inapplicable assets included quantities of 60mm, 81mm, and 105mm ammunition with anywhere from 177% to 399% of the requirement. In a very short period of time these items were to be critically short. Overall, the war reserves were inadequate as of 1 January 1965. Although the materiel posture indicated that it was adequate to support the total force eventually deployed, it was at the expense of degrading the readiness of the remainder of the forces including the Reserves.

#### 4. Production Base 94/

The maintenance of an adequate production base in peacetime is dependent on effective industrial mobilization planning. The planning for supporting Vietnam requirements was inadequate. The production in lay-away was of World War II design and generally obsolete. The constant pressure from DOD to reduce facilities resulted in the disposal of most of the DOD production plants. The active and inactive industrial facilities of DOD still remaining were mostly WWII plants predominantly geared for ammunition and propellant production. The Army's private industry munition production units consisted of 240 base production units (BPUs) assigned to 180 private firms. Of this total base, only 50% of GOCO plants and 21% of the BPUs were actively producing munitions or components thereof. Both the Air Force and the Marine Corps relied on the Army and Navy in-house production capability for almost all their conventional munitions. Prior to the build up, the Air Force guidance provided for 90 days of non-nuclear combat with modern air munitions and an additional 90 days using older munitions. The former requirement was not satisfied until FY 68. Guidance included tactical attack aircraft sorties only. No authorization or planning factor for B-52 aircraft was included. Gross stocks on hand were three times the tonnage requirement, however, most of the stocks were general purpose bombs left over from Korea.

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### 5. Pacific Theater Logistically Unready for War in 1965

#### a. Supply and Maintenance System

In the Pacific Theater the focal point for the supply control was to be USARPAC headquarters in Hawaii. The USARPAC Inventory Control Point (ICP) was established under a concept approved in April 1963 to provide a centralized source of logistic data for the Pacific Theater. It was scheduled to be activated in order to dovetail with the implementation of the CONUS supply system, the Army Supply and Maintenance System (TASAMS). 95/ The USARPAC ICP automated system was planned to be installed originally over an 18-month period. To meet DOD/DA requirements for phase out of the overseas supply officers at each of the major ports, the schedule for implementation of the USARPAC system was reduced by one year. This compression led to many crash and poorly conceived data processing procedures. In short, electronic accounting machine (EAM) procedures were converted to a computer operation without basic system redesign. 96/ In essence the USARPAC ICP installed a fully automated system utilizing EAM logic.

In early 1965 the USARPAC supply system was in complete disarray. The USARPAC ICP was unable to cope with the supply workload even prior to the major buildup starting in mid-1965. One of the keys to a responsive supply system is the periodic up-dating of the requisitioning objectives, a task the ICP in Hawaii (in the spring of 1965) had not been able to accomplish for six months. 97/ As a result, the depot on Okinawa was understocked on high-volume consumer items, and thus was passing requisitions through USARPAC to CONUS NICP's. The resulting delay in satisfying customer demands of the automated system was due to faulty design. Further, the inability of the communication system throughout the Pacific area to pass digital traffic electronically, completely slowed down the system. In most cases requisitions in punch card format were forwarded by courier between the various supply activities in the Pacific with resulting delays. 98/

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### b. Off-shore Logistic Base Readiness

#### 1) Okinawa

The off-shore base responsible for the support of Army forces in Southeast Asia was the US Army Ryukus Island command (USARYIS) on Okinawa. Not only was USARYIS charged with the supplying class II, IV & V Army-peculiar items, but it was also responsible for back up BS/DS maintenance, for base development planning. Assigned to the command as the logistic arm in RVN was the US Army Support Group, Vietnam until it was reorganized as US Army Vietnam (USARV) in July 1965.

In early 1960 the logistic base in Okinawa was operated by the 9th Logistic Command. However, this unit had been deployed to Thailand to operate the logistic base there in support of US operations in that country. As result USARYIS logistic activities were organized into functional commands directly under headquarters USARYIS. This included supply, maintenance, and terminal commands. Although OPLANs 32-64 and 39-65 each had requirements for a Logistic Command to operate the off-shore base, the exact location of a base had not been finalized until the spring of 1965 when the BENSON team was sent from CONUS to Okinawa to study the situation. Additionally, the 2nd Logistical Command at Fort Lee, Va., although in the OPLAN 32-64 troop list as the off-shore base headquarters, had not been assigned a planning task in the 32-yr plan. 99/ The USARYIS organization, methods of operation, and procedures were not capable of coping with the Vietnam support missions. Required was:

- A logistic headquarters to direct and control the various functional commands as a major subordinate command of USARYIS;
- A completely automated supply system; and
- Additional logistic troops and facilities.

The facilities on Okinawa were some of the best in the Army, however, more storage facilities were required to meet contemplated work loads.

#### 2) Japan and Other Countries

Japan had been the major support base for US forces in the Korean war, and many of the US logistic facilities had been returned

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to Japanese control. However, Japanese maintenance facilities with their highly skilled work forces were under-utilized. Japan was an ideal source for off-shore, cost-favorable procurement of supplies and equipment, and it offered an ideal location for a general hospital center.

Other potential sources of logistic support such as Taiwan, the Philippines, and Singapore had not been fully exploited in the pre-1965 era. Primary reliance was placed upon CONUS sources for supply support. Overall the US logistic posture in the Pacific area was unprepared to meet a major escalation of combat troop deployments to Southeast Asia in a combat role, and that unfortunate circumstance was exacerbated by the president's refusal to call up the Reserve Component.

### 6. Contingency Plans Not Implemented

Contingency plans for Southeast Asia discussed previously, to include CONUS activities support plans, had been developed and changes made to them as late as February 1965. However, the forces committed to South Vietnam by DOD/CINCPAC/MACV were far in excess of those visualized under OPLAN 32-65 -- the troop lists for deployment to RVN were in a constant state of flux throughout 1965. In general the strength in Vietnam was planned to increase by approximately 100,000. 100/ Although the contingency plans did not resemble the situation as it actually developed, those plans did provide valuable insights concerning logistical problem areas and limiting factors. Unfortunately, action had not been taken to alleviate many of the logistic constraints. 101/

### I. SUMMARY ANALYSIS AND INSIGHTS

Somewhat overshadowed in this chapter are the formidable demands with which US logisticians had to cope and the remarkable performance they achieved. For example, the Army Material Command (AMC), a then newly organized agency, had primary logistic responsibilities for supporting the buildup in Vietnam and fostered a number of innovative solutions to major obstacles:

- An automatic supply system which enabled the initial buildup of forces to be supported;

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- The establishment and operation of the floating aircraft maintenance facility in Vietnam--the USN Corpus Christi Bay--that reduced the pipeline of requirements for high-cost aircraft components (In FY 68 it overhauled components valued at \$44 million at a cost \$6.8 million);
- The establishment of the roll-on and roll-off service between Okinawa, Vietnam, and Thailand, and of the Sea Land container service to Okinawa and Southeast Asia.
- The use of De Long piers in RVN in lieu of permanent pier construction.
- The development of Project Power Float, which utilized T-2 Tankers as floating power barges for supporting Vietnam bases.

It should also be noted that the analysis and insights discussed herein pertain to a unique experience: a hostile environment in a largely undeveloped region wherein our land lines of communication were subject to enemy ground attacks but air, sea, and land LOCs were secure from enemy air attack. Notwithstanding, a number of major factors surfaced as a result of the Vietnam experience which the military planner needs to consider and evaluate in planning for future potential contingencies worldwide.

The Joint Logistic Review Board identified the following factors as having generated unexpected logistical problems: 102/

- US combat forces were committed without the lead time needed for normal or special logistic preparations.
- US military power was applied incrementally with continual changes in logistic requirements, providing little opportunity for coherent long-range planning.
- Reserve forces and civilian industry were not mobilized despite the magnitude of the conflict.
- Logistic operations of the military departments were subjected to a degree of control at the Department of Defense level that required the referral of many routine logistics decisions to high levels for resolution.

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The BDM study team would add at least three other significant factors within PACOM and its component commands that generated unique demands:

- Pre-hostilities logistic contingency planning within PACOM and its component commands was inadequate to obtain the proper balance between operational concepts and logistic capabilities.
- Significant organizational and doctrinal changes were generated by a major reorganization of the DOD logistic structure from the technical service orientation to a functional organization in the early 1960's.
- The retrograde of forces and material from the combat zone (1969-1972) was done while under fire with continuing high priority support of the in-country combat forces.

Base development planning failed to receive the priority of emphasis required prior to the build-up phase. The logistic problems originating with the rapid build up were compounded by the lack of facilities. Although between 1962 and 1965 the US advisory and support strength in Vietnam increased to 23,000, base development to prepare for major US intervention was accomplished only on a limited basis. Further, contingency base development plans were not in consonance with the rapid buildup that took place in 1965. The theater staff was unprepared organizationally to plan, execute, and manage the base development program initiated in 1965. Early efforts prior to 1965 in the base development area such as road building, field construction, and construction of modern communication systems were oriented primarily to the economic improvement of the country. Military aid efforts were devoted to improvements in the training force structure and unit operational readiness rather than a balanced program to improve the military-related infrastructure. (NOTE: This comment reflects a logistic bias. During the counterinsurgency phase, nation building assumed a high priority, and it may have been the proper course.)

The base development program executed in Vietnam was unnecessarily costly due to the philosophy of importing into the combat environment a US peacetime living standard for the committed forces. Austerity certainly was not the watchword and fiscal restraints were not practiced. The



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unnecessary costs of the base development program resulted mainly from the affluent policies of DOD, the Services, and the in-country commands. Congressional authorization and appropriation acts thus gave the stamp of congressional approval to wasteful practices.

Failure to mobilize the Reserves caused an immediate serious shortage of military engineer construction units necessitating primary reliance initially on civilian contractors to accomplish the base development programs. Rapid escalation of the construction program resulted in loss of effective management control of the contractor effort, both by the prime contractor and the government contracting agency, resulting in the procurement of unneeded supplies, equipment, and services. Government costs increased substantially and great quantities of supplies and materiel were lost due to inadequate storage facilities, physical security, and inventory controls.

The rapid buildup of US forces in RVN with their accompanying supplies and equipment, augmented with the automatic resupply (PUSH) packages initially, followed by supplies and equipment which they requisitioned (PULL), created a virtual log jam of supplies and shipping in Vietnam. Insufficient port capacity and critical shortages of logistic troops and facilities in RVN adversely affected our capability to receive, store, and distribute supplies.

Probably the greatest innovation in inter-theater transportation was the use of containerization. As a result of General Besson's urgings, MSTC entered into a contract with Sealand to provide a direct door-to-door service with 35-foot containers from west coast ports to customers of 2nd Logistics Command in Okinawa. However, it was not until July 1967 that the service was extended to Vietnam. There was a reluctance on the part of the Navy to utilize this service initially inasmuch as the rates were higher than those for their round-bottom, break-bulk, leased vessels. The service eventually was expanded to include Japan, Korea, Thailand, the Philippines, and then Vietnam. Refrigerated cargo, private automobiles, household goods and ammunition were also subsequently shipped by this service. A major finding of the JLRB was:

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Containerization offers the Services a major opportunity for a breakthrough in simplifying and speeding logistic support to deployed forces. Therefore, the use of containers should be developed and exploited as rapidly as possible.

Lack of supply discipline and of confidence in the supply system added to the problem of large excesses of equipment and materials, generated by:

- Requisitioning items without adhering to follow-up procedures.
- Inflating demands and generating multiple issues of items.
- Assigning high priority designations to all requisitions.
- Failing to code requisitions as recurring or non-recurring
- Hoarding supplies at unit levels either intentionally or because of ignorance of disposition procedures. (Army manuals and doctrine emphasize, even today, forward movement of supply, but little on the retrograde of excesses.)
- Abusing the "blank check" policies in the early stages.

The Vietnam War was fought under peacetime statutory and regulatory limitations that were inapplicable to the situation. Those affecting facility engineering functions were:

- The limitation on use of O&M funds for minor construction was not compatible with requirements of the combat zone or construction-cost escalation. (Limits should be raised to a level sufficient for a combat theater of operation, and approval authority should be delegated to an appropriate command level.)
- Strict application of the Armed Services Procurement Regulations (ASPR) on use of personal service contracts is impracticable in a combat environment. Modification of the ASPR is required to permit personal service contracts in wartime.
- The statutory requirement to notify the House Armed Services Committee before restoring or replacing facilities damaged or destroyed by hostile action in a war zone is impracticable, and authority for reconstruction should be delegated to the appropriate in-country command level.

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Depot overhaul could not be accomplished in Vietnam due to the lack of skills, facilities, and the combat environment. Hence, an intensively managed program was developed to control the flow of serviceable equipment to Vietnam and the retrograde of unserviceable assets to out-of-country facilities capable of accomplishing necessary rebuild quickly and economically. This "Closed Loop Program" began in December 1966. Sophisticated communications equipment and complicated weapons, aircraft and electronics components were overhauled in CONUS depots. The closed loop program helped overcome the lack of sufficient assets in the supply pipeline and facilitated a one-for-one replacement cycle.

The rapid buildup in RVN without mobilizing the Reserve Component made it necessary to draw on materiel and equipment in or scheduled for the Reserves to outfit Regular units deploying to RVN. The inadequacy of War Reserve Material and Supplies (WRMS) was underscored by the Vietnam War.

Many government-owned production facilities and equipment were obsolete and lacked funds for adequate maintenance and rehabilitation. The DOD disposal effort resulted in too few plants to support contingencies, and the grossly inadequate industrial mobilization planning resulted in reduced responsiveness of the industrial capability.

### J. LESSONS

In future conflicts, US construction efforts should be a responsibility of the theater command to facilitate planning, contracting and construction execution. The Army should have the primary responsibility for construction, although the need for augmentation by construction units from other Services must be anticipated and planned for.

- Severe constraints must be imposed upon the construction effort, and only operationally needed facilities should be constructed.
- Procedures must be developed to provide effective management controls over construction contract efforts, particularly those of the magnitude of the RVN joint venture contract.

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- Overseas major supply bases are required for the storage of pre-positioned, long-lead-time construction material and supplies to increase responsiveness. Major overseas depots should also serve as major supply points for consumable construction material which will be shipped forward on "as required" basis.

A closed-loop, centrally controlled, overhaul maintenance system utilizing both theater and CONUS facilities is essential for peacetime and wartime maintenance. Additionally, provisions for using such a closed-loop program must be included in mobilization and contingency plans. It should be noted that the effectiveness of a closed-loop system depends on the availability of serviceable assets and the timely retrograde of unserviceables to the maintenance centers.

The current Army active duty structure fails to provide for adequate flexibility in meeting facility-engineering force requirements for contingency operations in less than a total mobilization.

Failure to practice supply discipline and fiscal restraint in the early phases of a buildup will contribute materially to serious logistical and fiscal problems.

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## CHAPTER 10 ENDNOTES

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20. Ibid., p. 180
21. Ibid., p. 204, NSC 5429/2, August, 1954.
22. Eckhardt, pp. 11-12; also Gravel, Pentagon Papers, Volume I, pp. 205-206.
23. Ibid.
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25. Ibid., p. 4.
26. Ibid., p. 5
27. Williams and Horner conversation, supra note 15.
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29. Williams and Horner conversation, supra note 15.
30. Ibid.
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32. Interview with MG Horner

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34. Gravel, Pentagon Papers, Volume I, p. 218, 219.
35. LTG Dong Van Khuyen, RVNAF Logistics, p. 25.
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37. LTG Dong Van Khuyen, RVNAF Logistics.
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## CHAPTER 11 COMMAND, CONTROL AND COOPERATION

Clearly, more than any other kind of warfare, counter-insurgency must respect the principle of a single direction. A single boss must direct the operations from beginning until the end.

### D. Galula, Counter-Insurgency Warfare 1/

Why did the United States and the Vietnamese settle for such a diffuse and fragmented management [command] structure, which was in such great contrast to an enemy who practiced a much higher degree of centralized control over all of his insurgency assets?

### Robert Komer, Bureaucracy Does Its Thing 2/

#### A. INTRODUCTION

The war in Vietnam was unique in many respects, not least of which were the multiple and sometimes unorthodox command and control arrangements. At the peak of the US involvement in late 1968, there were over 1.6 million South Vietnamese, US and other Free World military personnel concentrated in the 660,000 square miles of RVN; no single person or agency was in overall charge of them. This chapter examines the command and control structure under which US forces operated in Southeast Asia. One of the most contentious issues for US commanders was how best to control the vast air power available in the theater; this controversy will be examined here as well as in Chapter 6.

The Principles of War differ somewhat from country to country, but "Unity of Command" ranks high on all listings. Nevertheless, this cardinal rule is difficult to achieve even for national forces in a complex environment such as existed in Southeast Asia; when allies are involved command problems multiply dramatically. Since World War I the US has been "enamored with coalition war and allies," in spite of the numerous frustrations and difficulties encountered.<sup>3/</sup> Many techniques were employed in Vietnam to obtain at least a workable degree of unity of effort if not

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not command between the South Vietnamese, US and the other foreign forces. World War II provided experience and doctrine in working together with more or less equal allies, and the Korean War produced a useful model for conducting a war with a weak and inexperienced Asian ally. The solution eventually adopted to fight the "Big War" (1965-1969) in Vietnam was one that depended heavily on coordination and cooperation - an inherently weak unifier; fortunately during that period, the enemy was never militarily strong enough to exploit that potential vulnerability.

Through trial and error during World War II, the US developed the basic principles of interservice (joint) and interallied (combined) warfare which remain as the core of current US doctrines. After that war, General of the Army Eisenhower played a key role in ensuring that the hard-won command experience would not be lost. An early result was the National Security Act of 1947, which established the Department of Defense, including a separate Department of the Air Force, and created the basis for the Unified Command Plan (UCP). President Eisenhower further endorsed the principle of unity of command in 1958 when he submitted legislation amending the National Security Act:

Strategic and tactical planning must be completely unified, combat forces organized into unified commands, each equipped with the most efficient weapons systems that science can develop, singly led and prepared to fight as one, regardless of Service.4/

The US military chain of command started with the President, as Commander-in-Chief, and went through the Secretary of Defense to the Unified and Specified Commands (such as the Strategic Air Command); in practice the Secretary of Defense naturally issues his orders through the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS). The Services thus were cut out of the operational chain as were their Secretaries and Chiefs; the latter, however, in their corporate role as members of the JCS retained their statutory advisory responsibilities. Despite organizational theory and statutory constraints on their operational authority, the Service Chiefs are very

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interested and influential in the planning for and fighting of wars. The conflict in Southeast Asia was no exception as it provided a large arena for the natural and sustained "battle" for roles, missions, and resources.

That war intermixed and confused the "normal" relationship between politics and war fighting, at least to most of the American military who, through tradition and preference, separate the two - sometimes artificially. This trait was exhibited near the close of World War II when General Omar Bradley argued, successfully, against attempting to capture Berlin ahead of the Russians; characteristically, he didn't want to incur additional casualties for a "political objective."<sup>5</sup>/ In Vietnam the nature of the conflict was such that political, economic, and military measures should have been closely coordinated on a daily basis: in Washington, Saigon, and down to the individual villages and hamlets. Failure to do so earlier, efficiently, and consistently proved to be one of our more serious shortcomings. Our opponents adhered to their well-understood and battle-tested doctrine; they had a more suitable organization and much more relevant experience in insurgency than did the US or its Asian allies.

Theory and organization, however, are of little value without the right leaders for the conflict environment; despite their many shortcomings and blunders, our enemy's political and military leaders, on balance, better understood and more skillfully exploited the situation than did ours. An inferior command and control arrangement can play a part in the loss of a war, but even a perfect one commanding superior military forces and financial resource can not ensure success. Human intelligence, adaptability, resourcefulness, and willpower often are more important than are "chains and climates of command".

### B. WHILE ADVISING AND SUPPORTING (1950-1964)

#### 1. Six Years with the French

The First Indochinese War is usually considered to have begun in December 1946 with the widespread -- if fairly weak -- Viet Minh attacks against the French. The US did not show overt interest in supporting the latter until May 1950, and then only because of our fear of the spread of

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"monolithic communism;" one month later the North Koreans attacked the South.

The first US Military Assistance Advisory Group (MAAG) for Indochina initially was authorized 128 men. A planning group arrived in Saigon on 3 August 1950 and the remainder on 20 November. Then on 23 December the "Pentalateral Agreements" for military aid were signed by the governments of Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos, France and the US. The chain of command ran from the President through the Navy (executive agent) and the Commander in Chief Pacific (CINCPAC) to BG Francis G. Brink, Chief of the MAAG.6/

Despite that agreement the MAAG had little influence and no authority over the training of the indigenous forces; the French Expeditionary Corps retained that prerogative. By statute, US MAAG are required to ensure that the equipment supplied reaches its proper destination and is employed and maintained efficiently. The French High Command did not relish or permit such "end-use inspections" and kept effective control over the logistics system to the detriment of our MAAG and the fledgling Vietnamese National Army.7/ The JCS, anxious to find out how US equipment was being employed, sent Major General Graves B. Erskine, USMC, out to Indochina. His report disparaged French tactics and "Beau Geste Forts"; when the French became aware of this report they were irate.8/ Nor were they very cooperative with or receptive to the ideas of MG John W. O'Daniel, who was sent on three inspection trips to the area by Adm. Radford, then CINCPAC.9/

After the fall of Dien Bien Phu, the Geneva Conference signaled the end of the First Indochina War. While Laos and Cambodia became independent within the French Union, Vietnam was "temporarily" divided into two resettlement zones at the 17th parallel. The French Union Forces included most of the Vietnamese National Army regrouped in the Southern half. John "Iron Mike" O'Daniel, now a lieutenant general and Chief MAAG, worked out an agreement with Gen Ely (who had replaced Navarre as both High Commissioner for Vietnam and Commander in Chief of the French Expeditionary Corps) which gave the US a role in the training of the Vietnamese forces.

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President Eisenhower sent Gen J. Lawton Collins to Saigon as a Special Envoy, and he negotiated the "Ely - Collins agreement" in December 1954 which granted autonomy to Armed Forces of the State of Vietnam as of the following July. The agreement also provided that the US MAAG would assist the GVN directly in organizing and training its forces; the French retained control of any military operations. This was a fundamental change in relations and led to the establishment of the Franco-American Training Relations and Instruction Mission (TRIM) on 1 Feb 1955. Policy was coordinated by the Vietnamese Minister of Defense, a senior French general and the Chief of the US MAG. Of the 342 MAAG spaces the US filled 217 staff and field advisory positions in TRIM. This reduced the capability for dealing with the expanding logistics problems.10/

### 2. The Changing Scene

In 1955 a number of key events took place in Indochina: Cambodia and Laos declared themselves fully independent, and the newly elected Ngo Dinh Diem established the Republic of (South) Vietnam. MAAG Indochina was thus rendered irrelevant, so it was reorganized into MAAGs for both Vietnam and Cambodia, although General O'Daniel retained the responsibility for training the Cambodian Air Force and Navy. Due to the Geneva Accords restrictions on Laos and its delicate political situation, a Programs Evaluation Office (PEO) was established in Vientiane, subordinate to the US Embassy. The necessary reorganizations permanently fragmented US command and control in Indochina while the Viet Minh and later the Lao Dong Party continued to view it as a single theater of operations.11/

### 3. The Temporary Equipment Recovery Mission

LTG Samuel Williams, who replaced Gen. O'Daniel in late 1955, soon attempted to get more spaces for his MAAG to replace the loss of the French in TRIM. As an expedient to help solve his growing logistical problems, he was authorized an additional 350 men to be employed as a Temporary Equipment Recovery Mission (TERM). Although officially separate from the MAAG, the mission soon became an integral part of that organization.12/

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### 4. The French Recede

The final withdrawal of French military forces took place in April 1956 but they continued to advise the Vietnamese Air Force and Navy for yet another year. Although the French took much of the US-supplied equipment to Algeria, a great deal was left - some of it recently offloaded and still boxed - at the Phu Tho Race Track which was called "The Arc of Diamonds." The MAAG then had to assist RVNAF in developing an indigenous logistics system from scratch.

### 5. Lack of Unity

Throughout this period the overall US effort in Vietnam was supervised by the US Ambassador; this concept was reinforced when President Kennedy formally established "Country Teams." In practice, however, the various US agencies in RVN naturally displayed more loyalty to their superiors in Washington than they did to the ambassador. The complex political-military situation in RVN provided an additional impetus - if one was needed - to interservice and interagency bickerings; various organizational elements often tried to outshine or "scoop" their US competitors. Chiefs of the MAAG often spent more time and had more influence with President Diem than did our ambassador. This sometimes was more a matter of personality and style than it was of protocol. These cleavages permitted Diem more maneuver room. Clearly the overall lack of unity of effort - on all sides - was detrimental to US aims.<sup>13/</sup>

### 6. Diem Had the Power

President Diem was, for both better and worse, the undisputed Commander-in-Chief of RVNAF. He had a weak Ministry of Defense (MOD) and a relatively powerless Joint General Staff (JCS), which was to his liking. The initial South Vietnamese governmental and military organizational structures, carryovers from the French, were overlapping and confusing. GVN, in reality the Ngo family, directly controlled the provinces and through them districts, villages, and friendly hamlets; the autonomous cities such as Da Nang, Hue, and Dalat also reported directly to Saigon. Initially ARVN was composed of four field and six light Divisions plus scattered territorial Regiments and other Sudler units. Paramilitary



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forces -- the Civil Guard (CG) and the Self Defense Forces (SDC) -- nominally were under the Ministry of the Interior and were equipped and trained by the US Operations Mission (USOM). The National Police had their own territorial divisions which did not coincide with the political and military boundaries.

The organizational muddle inherited and then further complicated by the Ngos in order to "divide and control" potential competitors for power, was a severe handicap to both nation building and military operations. The span of control of the GVN was impossibly broad, yet new provinces were created by the Ngos to fit their evaluation of the political-military situation. The NLF and PLAF took advantage of the confused and diffused command and control arrangements by establishing some of their local base areas along interprovincial boundaries. This tactic provided them a great deal of immunity and flexibility. GVN district and province chiefs were primarily concerned about the security of their own headquarters and the major lines of communications; thus were coordinated operations too seldom conducted with adjacent provinces. If threatened by forces in one province, the enemy skipped into a neighboring one until the GVN troops returned to their home bases.<sup>15/</sup>

If the Ngos' version of "Centralized Control" was harmful in the military field, it was even more so in the critical political and pacification arenas. The adverse impact of this mode of governing was analyzed in chapter 2, "Government", Volume II and in Chapter 5 "Pacification", Volume V. By contrast, the enemy's organizational structure and methods far better synchronized the political and military tools available to them.

The aborted paratroop coup against Diem, in November 1960, started another round of civil and military "musical chairs", creating more difficulties in command and cooperation at a time when a synchronized nationwide effort was sorely needed.

In December 1960, the GVN, on US advice, took several steps to strengthen their organizational structure: the Civil Guard was restored under the Minister of Defense (MOD), and the territory was divided into corps and division areas with a separate capital military region.<sup>16/</sup>

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### 7. The Insurgency Spreads Rapidly

By the time of the Taylor-Rostow trip to RVN in October 1961, the security situation in the countryside, and especially in the Mekong Delta, had deteriorated badly. The USG was faced with a major dilemma: either increase sharply the scope and effectiveness of US aid and advice or face up to the probable defeat of our aims in RVN and the rest of Indochina. At this time there were still only about 900 US military assigned to the MAAG, although a number of others, to include Special Forces, were in Country on a Temporary Duty (TDY) basis.

President Kennedy accepted most of Taylor's recommendations, and the numbers of advisors and support troops--to include helicopter units--multiplied dramatically as did arms and supplies to RVNAF. The expanded role and size of US military forces in RVN required new command and logistics structures.

The US Military Assistance Command Vietnam (MACV) was established in February 1962 with General Paul Harkins selected as the commander (COMUSMACV). There had been some debate in USG circles as to whether MACV should report directly to the JCS or through CINCPAC (then Admiral Felt); the latter's views and those of the JCS prevailed and MACV remained a subordinate unified Command, under CINCPAC, until it was disestablished in early 1973. The primary reason for this arrangement was that "[CINCPAC] was responsible for the entire Pacific region, including Southeast Asia, and would have to support the command in Saigon logistically. . ."17/ Another major consideration was the role that COMUSMACV would have to play if any of the US unilateral or SEATO Contingency plans were executed. The State Department concurred in this command relationship with the understanding that the US Ambassador in Saigon would retain his overall authority.18/

At the time when MACV was established, it was believed that it was a temporary expedient to meet and solve a rather short term crisis. For this reason MAAGV, with MG. Charles Timmes as chief, was kept intact under MACV. General Harkins, however, was the Senior US Advisor to RVNAF and to the Chairman of the JGS. He also was the US Army Component Commander in country.19/

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Gen. Harkin's responsibilities were expanded further in May 1962, when he was appointed as COMUSMACTHAI; MG. Theodore Conway served as his deputy in Thailand. Later, due to the sensitivities of the Thais, this arrangement was changed to place MACTHAI on an equal organizational basis with MACV.<sup>20/</sup>

As the size and missions of the US forces in Vietnam expanded along with the magnitude of the military aid program, so did the administrative and logistics problems. Hq. US Army Pacific in Hawaii... "removed the 'provisional' designation from the US Army Support Group Vietnam, [and] attached it to US Army, Ryukyu Islands for administrative and logistical support".<sup>21/</sup> The Support Group was under the operational control of MACV. In July 1962, the Support Group was assigned directly to the US Army, Ryukyu Islands. Increasing US involvement in intelligence, signal, special warfare, airmobility, etc. led to the upgrading of the Support Group into a Support Command under BG "Cider Joe" Stilwell in March 1964. Logistical control arrangements are examined, in detail, in Volume VI, Chapter 10, "Logistics and Bases".

In 1962, control of the air assets and space became a problem and was subject to a number of compromise organizational approaches over the years. This issue is addressed separately in Section F of this chapter and further in Volume VI, Chapter 6, "In the Air".

### 8. Diem Dies and So Does Counterinsurgency

The poorly coordinated and fought Battle of Ap Bac in January 1963 played a significant role in opening up a "credibility gap" between senior US/GVN officials in Saigon and influential elements of the news media. It also fanned the frustrations of many key leaders in the USG over both the real and perceived inefficiency and intransigence of GVN. The inept handling of the Buddhist crisis by Diem and Nhu led to their overthrow and murder in November. The political chaos which followed was soon translated into near military impotence. In 1964 RVN was nearing collapse, an event which probably would have taken place in 1965 without strong US air and ground support.

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The Battle of Binh Gia in late December 1964 and early January 1965 was fought and won by the newly organized 9th PLAF(VN) Division; that battle plus the presence of regular PAVN (NVA) units in and near the Central Highlands indicated the beginning of Phase III (General Counter-offensive) of a classic People's War. It became increasingly clear, in Saigon and in Washington, that the situation was rapidly deteriorating beyond the point where aid and advice alone would suffice.

### 9. The Period in Perspective

Although the US had post WWII experience with military assistance programs, such as in Greece, Turkey, Taiwan and South Korea, the situation in Indochina in 1950 was unique. The French were in full control of operations and logistics, so our aid had to be furnished through their high command and used as they saw fit. The organization and operations of the initial US MAAG were tailored to meet this reality. As the situation changed over time, so did the MAAG. Organizational innovations, such as TRIM and TERM, were employed to help overcome problems concerning command and control and personnel strength ceilings. The establishment of RVN in 1955 and the withdrawal of the residual French military in early 1956 opened the way for direct cooperation with GVN and RVNAF, but the US military strength in country was constrained by the Geneva Accords until late in 1961 when the US decided to provide whatever was necessary to defeat the insurgency.

Once the French withdrew their residual force in early 1956, the US had the opportunity to advise and assist both GVN and RVNAF on how best to organize themselves to build a nation and defeat an insurgency or People's War. The end result, however, was bad for the advisor and worse for the advisee.

### C. GVN AND RVNAF

#### 1. The Problem: How best to organize to fight a "two-faced war"?

Like their US counterparts - and partially due to advice (pressure) from them - the South Vietnamese leadership found it extremely difficult to establish and exercise command and control organizations and procedures that effectively met the demands of the complex and shifting nature of the conflict.

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The relative mix of the major components (political, social, economic, psychological and military) of the conflict changed over time; in 1954 the "threat" was primarily political and social, but in 1975 it was heavily and overtly military. But both GVN and RVNAF were poorly organized and controlled to meet the threats, and the fluctuating challenges between.

This issue is treated in more detail than others because the first and the last objective of the US military in Vietnam was to prepare RVNAF to defend RVN on their own.

### 2. The French Legacy

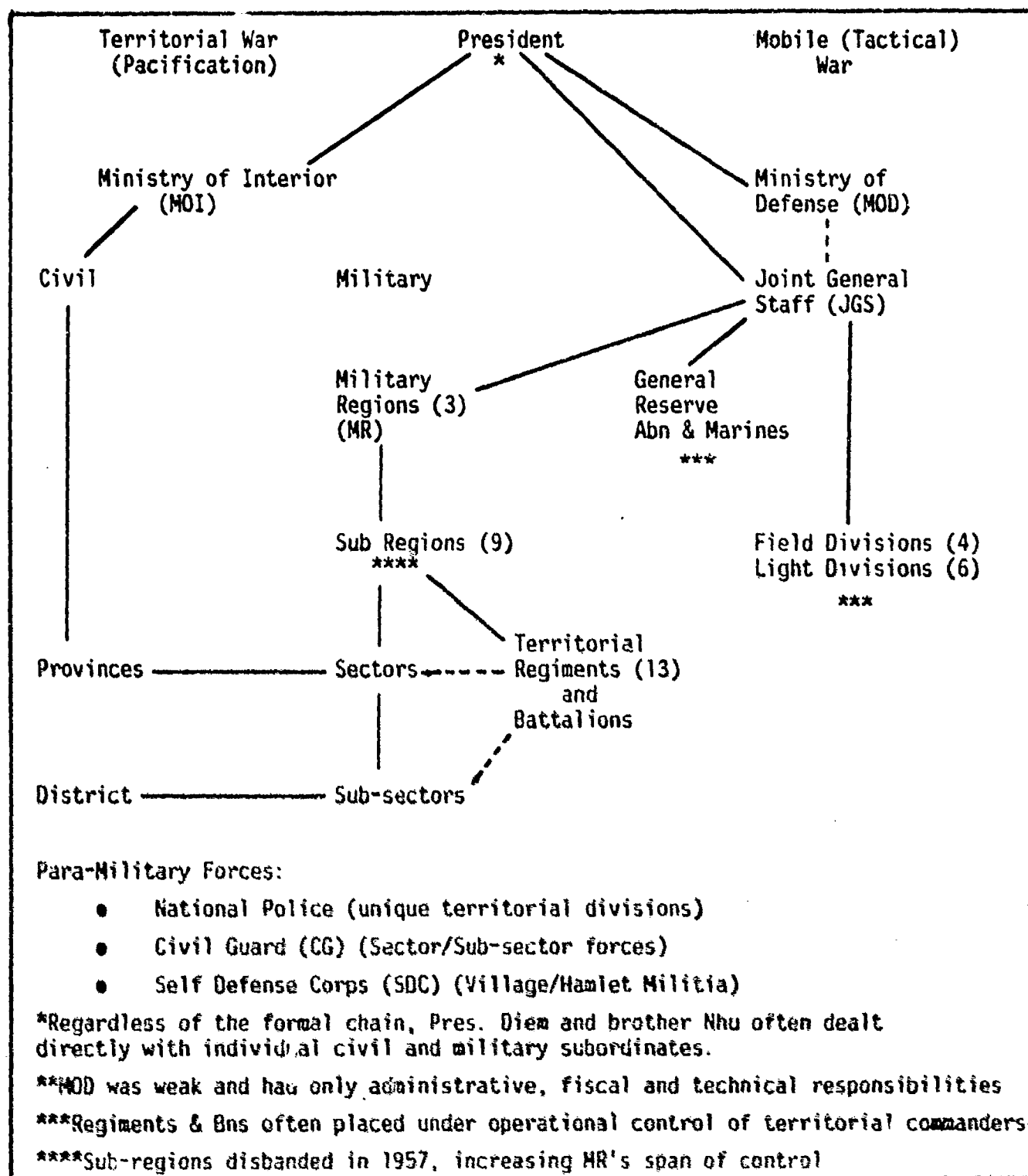
Although Diem and his brother Nhu were strongly anti-French, their initial governmental and military structures were based on the French models; these were the only forms that the new leadership understood. Additionally the French retained varying degrees of control of the RVNAF until their final withdrawal in April 1956; the advice of the early US MAAG thus was muted and diffused.22/

Having gone through eight years of war against the Viet Minh, a number of South Vietnamese had a better grasp of the true nature of the threat than did all but a few Americans. Thus the French dual (territorial and mobile) organizational concept was continued by the new republic. See Figure 11-1.

Recognizing the need for paramilitary forces for security in the countryside as well as in the cities, Diem organized along French lines the Civil Guard (CG), the village/hamlet Self Defense Corps (SDC), and the National Police; these organizations came under the control of the Ministry of the Interior. The US responsibility for aiding and advising those scattered, ill-equipped and ill-trained forces was assigned to the US operations missions (USOM); the police were advised by a contract group hired by Michigan State University. During the crucial early years of the insurgency, the US MAAG did not want to become involved with the paramilitary forces; its limited size and funds were concentrated on the increasingly conventional RVNAF.23/

The French control of operations had severely restricted the command and staff experience of the RVNAF leaders. The largest unit normally commanded by a Vietnamese was a battalion; only two Vietnamese had

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SOURCE: BDM Research and Analysis

Figure 11-1. Formal GVN and RVNAF Organization for Dual Missions (1956)

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commanded Groups Mobile (equivalent to US brigades). A further impediment to effective command and control was the Vietnamese concept that the commander is everything, and staffs were merely subservient appendages.24/

GVN established a Ministry of Defense (MOD), a Joint General Staff (JGS) and later a National Security Council (NSC). The NSC and MOD were weak and usually bypassed. The JGS acted more like the reactive personal staff of the president (or junta) than as innovative planners and overwatchers.25/

### 3. The US Moves In

Besides the often predicted political collapse of the Diem regime, the accepted US view of the primary threat to RVN (especially among the military) was the possibility of a conventional attack by the victorious Viet Minh (PAVN) divisions with the worst case including large Communist Chinese units. Although the MAAG recognized the potential internal security threat, it was considered to be secondary and as the responsibility of the political and police sides of the GVN and US "houses." Traditionally, the US military sharply separated themselves from politics--artificially and harmfully so--in attempting to counter an insurgency.

These misperceptions by the US, probably abetted by the recent Korean experience, heavily influenced the manner in which the RVNAF was reorganized, equipped, trained, and commanded. (The South Korean Army was originally organized as a constabulary type force and was soundly defeated in June 1950). The primary purpose of RVNAF was to deter or delay an invading force long enough to permit US or SEATO forces to intervene.26/

The US decision in 1957 to disband the light and field divisions and the territorial regiments/battalions in order to provide the men and materiel for the seven new and heavier standard divisions reduced the command and training problems, but this action created a partial security vacuum in the countryside and further tilted the scales towards a conventional military approach. This decision was taken, it should be noted, over the strong protests of the US Embassy in Saigon, which favored the battalion over the division approach.27/

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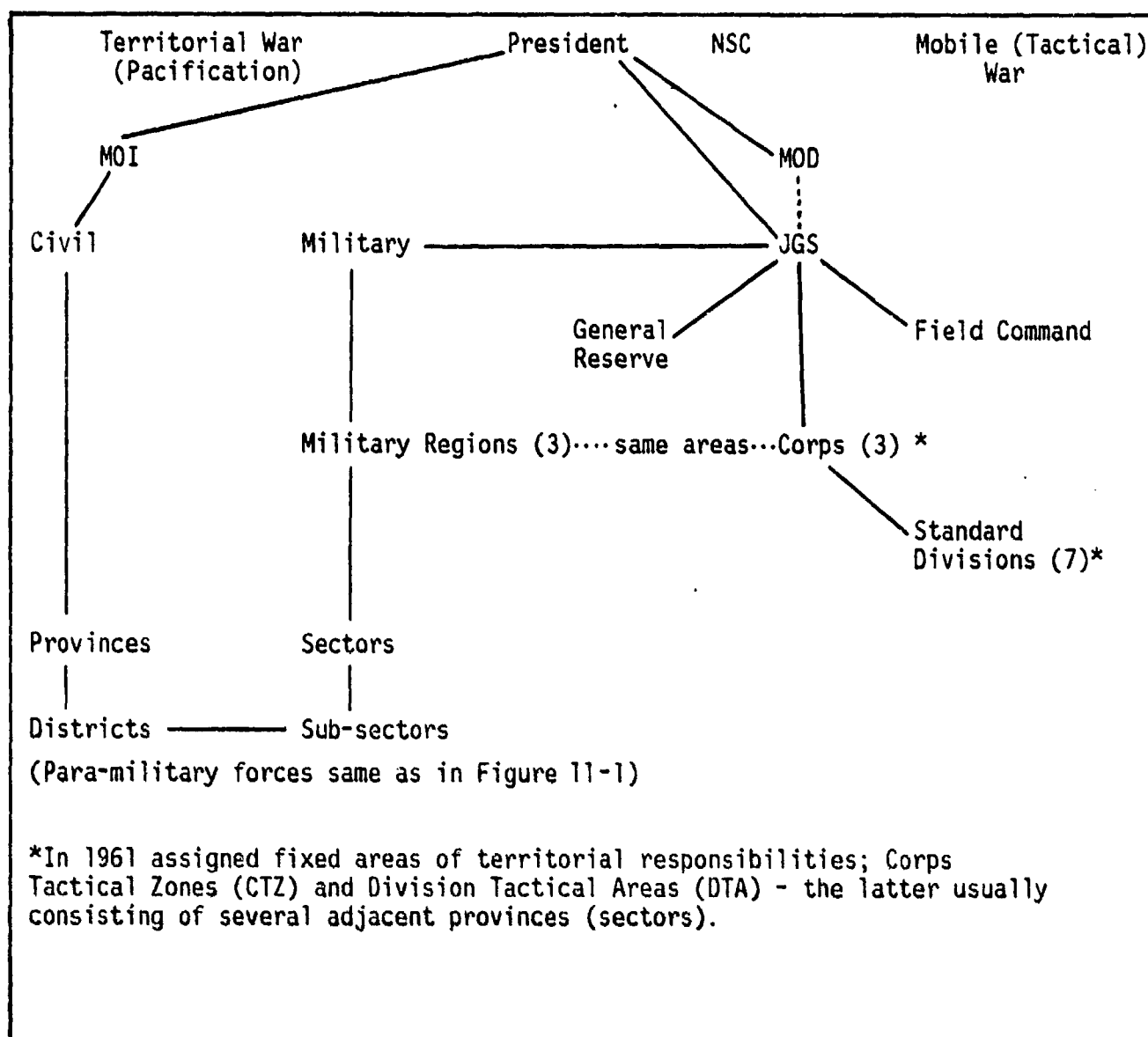
The MAAG recommended and the GVN and RVNAF wholeheartedly agreed to the formation of a field command (Army level) in 1958, and of three corp headquarters in 1959; these moves evoked pride and provided added prestige to the new government and its armed forces, but further confused command arrangements and reinforced the conventional approach to the problem. The field command wielded no substantial influence and was a "parking place" for senior officers - such as Big Minh - whom Diem and Nhu didn't trust (It was eliminated in 1964). The corps had identical geographic responsibilities, as did the military regions, and reported as equals to the JGS and the president. Battalions, regiments and even divisions were often placed under the operational control of the territorial commanders with security and "pacification" missions. The tactical unit commanders thus were caught between two jealous and competing seniors. See Figure 11-2.

In 1961, MAAG recommended the elimination of the military region headquarters. Diem agreed, and the corps were assigned the dual territorial and tactical responsibilities. While this change helped assure unity of command, it placed the corps commanders and their staffs in the unfamiliar and sensitive political, economic and social arenas. For several years the ARVN infantry divisions also were assigned fixed territorial responsibilities; the General Reserve consisted of only the the Airborne and Marine Brigades (later divisions) while the corps had to depend on the assigned Ranger Battalions (later groups). Over time, these quasi-independent "feifdums" could and often did, ignore or frustrate the military chain of command from the JGS. They also provided the means and opportunity for widespread graft and corruption. The sedentary attitude that developed among many commanders and staffs had an effect on large scale operations, and this aspect will be examined later in this section.28/

As the security situation deteriorated, especially in the Mekong Delta, the wide span of control of Military Region II (MRI) (all of old Cochin China) was reduced by creating MR5 in 1960 with responsibility for the Delta, and later a fourth corps headquarters was organized for that



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SOURCE: BDM Research and Analysis

Figure 11-2. Formal GVN and RVNAF Organization for Dual Missions (1959)

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region. Diem, against the wishes and advice of the MAAG, created the Ranger Command - initially 65 separate companies and about 10,000 men - in early 1960; it wasn't until late that year that the new MAAG chief decided to appoint a senior adviser to the Rangers and to give them full US support.<sup>29/</sup> As the NLF rapidly expanded its control over the countryside, the MAAG took responsibility in 1961 for the training and equipping of the CG and later of the SDC. Slowly and sometimes reluctantly, the US was beginning to view the internal and external security threats as two faces of the same coin; later there was some retrogression in this understanding.

Accurate, timely and relevant intelligence is extremely important for the planning and conduct of any military operation; it is absolutely essential to counter a well-led insurgency by providing a meaningful focus for commanders and staffs. The Taylor-Rostow mission to RVN (Oct 61) was shocked, - as was Sir Robert Thompson - at the fragmented, competitive and generally ineffective intelligence organs controlled by various GVN and RVNAF agencies; US intelligence efforts didn't get very high marks either.<sup>30/</sup> Over the following years, a great deal of thought, effort and monies were spent by both governments to upgrade and integrate the intelligence effort. Significant improvements were achieved: for example, a Combined Intelligence Center was established in Saigon and integrated Intelligence and Operations Centers were formed at Province (PIOC) and District (DIOC) levels.<sup>31/</sup> For too long, however, the bulk of the intelligence effort was concentrated on main force units, bases, and LOC at the expense of the heart and soul of insurgency, the VCI. And at the end, faulty command evaluation of inadequate intelligence helped set the stage for a shocking surprise and the final collapse.

#### 4. Diem, Nhu, and Others

Regardless of any formal chain of command or lines of authority, Diem as both president and commander in chief had the authority to interject instructions at any level of the civil and military machinery; he often dealt directly with individual province chiefs and corps/division commanders. So did his brother Nhu, but he did more on the political side.<sup>32/</sup> This disruptive method of command was due to a number of reasons:

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personal style, lack of prior executive experience, weak and timid administrations, and above all the growing distrust of anyone with personal prestige and power, especially the generals.

This ad hoc method of running a government and its armed forces by those who followed the Ngos (particularly by Thieu in his later years) was taken for granted by the almost impotent JGS.<sup>33/</sup> Thieu, of course, as one of the senior generals, believed that he knew as much, or more, about military matters as did any of his subordinates. This is a pernicious mind set for any military man to carry into a high political office. Circumstances change rapidly and one soon loses touch with reality. Attention to minute detail by a chief saps the confidence, morale and initiative of subordinates and also detracts from the ability of that chief to view and deal correctly with broad policy matters. When a leader with little or no relevant military experience delves into detail he invites chaos and even disaster.

### 5. Many "Armies"

As the insurgency spread and grew, so did the number of special organizations and units designed to counter it. (See Figure 11-3). Although specialized and elite units often performed valuable (and sometimes essential) roles, the sheer number and diversity of them created serious command and control problems and diverted energy, resources, and scarce leaderships from other important elements. A number of these organizations had their own commanders, training centers, support systems, pay scales, and uniforms, etc.

Since the Airborne and Marine Brigades (later divisions) formed the only truly mobile reserves available to the JGS, they were essential in countering the moves of the enemy's main force units - first PLAF and then PAVN. They were proud, aggressive, and tough, and generally they fought quite well. They posed special command problems, however, whenever they reinforced a corps or a division. Their division commanders were also the heads of their respective arms and normally were senior in rank and independent - even stubborn - in spirit. This attitude had a seriously adverse effect during two major campaigns as described in a following section.<sup>34/</sup>

The "Many Armies" of GVN (1969)

<u>Territorial</u>	<u>Mobile</u>
Regional Forces (RF) (ex CG)	Infantry Divisions (10)*
Popular Forces (PF) (ex SDC)	Airborne Division
Civilian Irregular Defense Groups (CIDG) (Later converted to Ranger Border Bn's)	Marine Division
Police Field Forces (PFF)	Ranger Bn's (latter groups)*
Peoples Self Defense Corps (PSDC) (Village Militia)	Navy (Sea & River)
Provincial Reconnaissance Units (PRV)	Air Force (incl's helos) artillery,* Engineer and Armored Cavalry units (and later tank battalions)

Special Forces

Question: Was this proliferation necessary and/or effective?

\*often employed in dispersed (semi) static security roles

Figure 11-3. The "Many Armies" of GVN (1969)

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The balance between conventional and unconventional forces changed over time as did the nature of the conflict, but not always in the right direction or degree. The covert number, type, composition, and purpose of military and paramilitary units needed to counter both the internal and external threats was a dilemma which was never resolved satisfactorily by GVN or their US advisors (See Figure 11-4).

### 6. The Big War

Senior ARVN commanders were confronted with additional command relationship problems in attempting to carry out their territorial (pacification) responsibilities during the "big unit war." Interspersed through their areas were the large base camps and facilities of over 600,000 foreign troops, primarily US and ROK. Each of these foreign units had its own tactical area of responsibility (TAOR) and generally conducted operations when, where and how desired with minimal coordination with the local ARVN territorial commander. For one thing they didn't want their plans "leaked" to the enemy - a real, but often counterproductive concern. Sometimes additional, but usually temporary, tactical areas of operations (TAOs) would be carved out of the ARVN commander's area for use by foreign units.

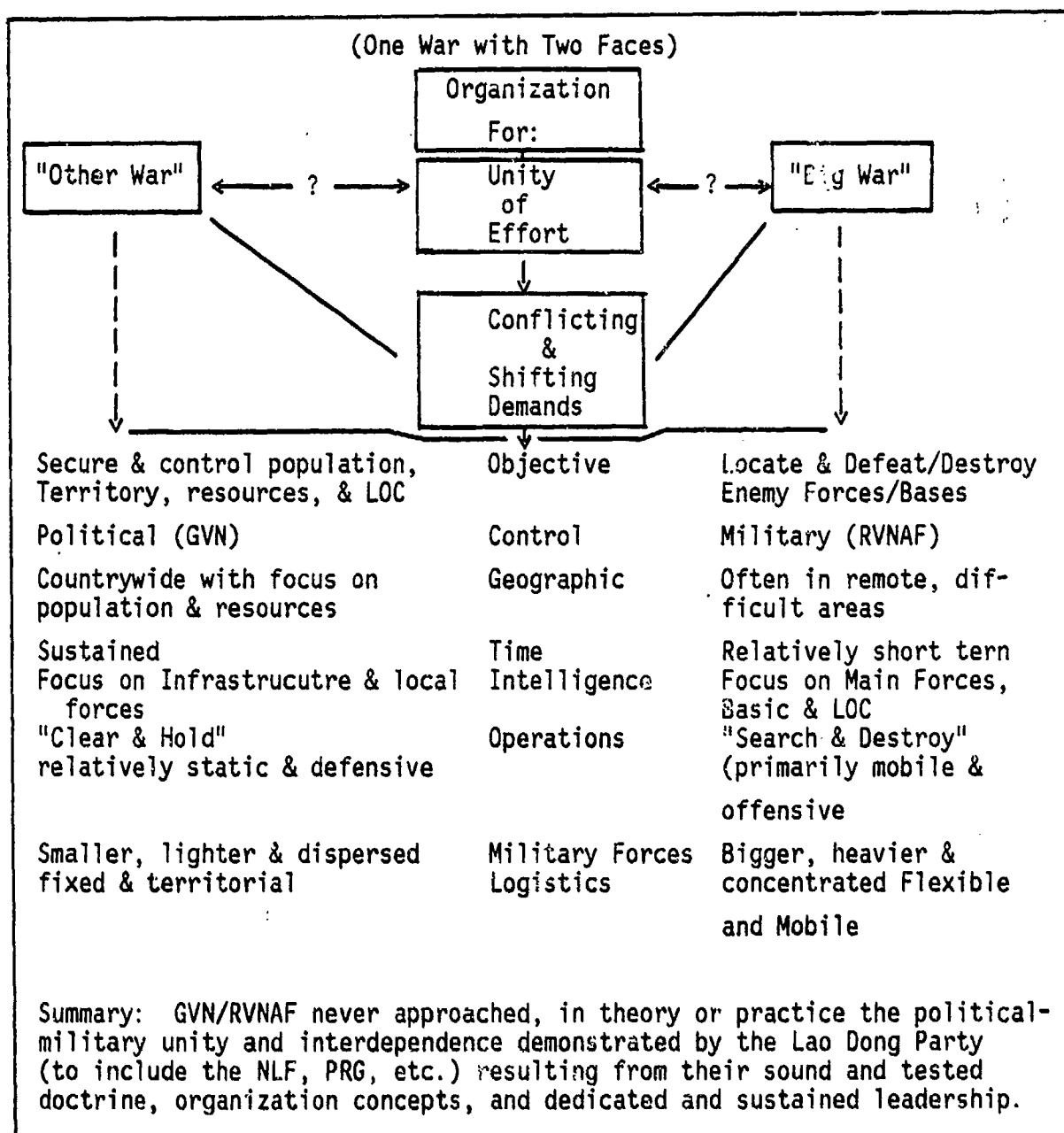
The purpose of the Annual Combined Campaign Plan (CCP) was to establish agreed priorities and to ensure coordination between the multiple national and international forces - both territorial and mobile. In effect, it was a MACV plan rubber stamped and issued by the JGS. Taking this fact into account, several ex-RVNAF commanders considered it of little value. At least one senior US commander stated that he never read the CCP, since it would only confuse him.<sup>35/</sup>

### 7. Battles and Leaders

The following capsule descriptions of several key campaigns illustrate the RVNAF's command successes but more often their failures.

#### a. Lamson 719

The initial plan for the 1971 incursion into Laos (Lamson 719) was prepared by US planners, but was largely "bought" by GVN and the JGS. Unfortunately the plan was based on inaccurate intelligence and on stereotyped US air mobile concepts. It was also complex and beyond the



SOURCE: BDM Research & Analysis

Figure 11-4. An Unresolved Organizational Dilemma for GVN and RVNAF (and Their US Advisors)

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ability of the RVNAF commanders to coordinate and execute effectively. (US advisors were not permitted in Laos). Because of personal style and a fear of leaks, the ARVN 1st Corps Commander, LTG Lam, confined the support planning to a few trusted officers; the logistics staff was let in too late to do their job properly! The static 1st Corps staff was split into three weak and ineffective echelons, and none were allocated to the US XXIV Corps Advance Hq at Khe Sanh. After a slow but generally successful beginning, the RVNAF units were hit by unexpectedly rapid and heavy (prearranged) PAVN counterblows. The fragile command structure was ineffective. General Lam exerted little personal presence or influence on the course of the action. The Vietnamese Marine Division Commander was also Commandant of his Corps and outranked Lam; personal relations were infrequent and strained.

Except for US air and helicopter support, individual Ranger battalions fought practically alone in the crucial firebase battles along the north flank of Highway 9. Under enemy pressure, the Airborne Division ignored orders to provide close protection to the 1st Armored Brigade, which was incrementally decimated. The cream of the RVNAF (Airborne, Marines, 1st Infantry, Rangers, and Armor) was soundly defeated and only saved from disaster by a massive and concentrated US air effort. All helicopters were placed under the control of the Assistant Division Commander of the 101st Airborne Division, who got the job done but at a heavy price. The Vietnamization process obviously still had a long way to go, especially concerning planning, command, and control.36/

### b. The Easter Offensive of 1972

General Lam, unfortunately, was still in command in 1st ARVN corps when the enemy launched a surprise conventional attack a year later. Characteristically, Lam did not even move from Da Nang to the 3d ARVN Division Headquarters near Quang Tri until later on the second day of the offensive! This newly organized division, reinforced by two VNMCMC brigades, bore the brunt of the battles along the DMZ. As reinforcements (Marine, Airborne, Ranger and Armor) were hastened to the front, they also were placed under the operational control of the able division commander, BG Giai, until he was faced with an impossible span of control, at one time

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a heterogenous mix of seven brigade-sized forces. The Marine Division Headquarters was not employed, but it did interfere as it had in Lam Son 719. Again, the separate organizations tended to go their independent ways under enemy pressure. The reinforced 3d Division was defeated badly, Quang Tri was lost, and Hue was almost lost. Even Thieu now realized that General Lam must go. He was replaced by LTG Ngo Quang Truong, one of the most capable and respected senior ARVN generals. His personal presence, drive and professionalism soon restored discipline and confidence. He grouped units under a reasonable and responsive span of control, and the commander of the Marine Division was replaced by a more cooperative senior colonel. The front was stabilized, Hue was held, and with US air support Quang Tri city eventually was recaptured. Excellent leadership and historically sound command and control arrangements were instrumental in turning defeat into a well-earned victory. Unfortunately, the PAVN learned more from this reversal of fortunes than did GVN and RVNAF.

### c. March-April 1975

The strategic key to the coastal plains and the northern approaches to Saigon lay in the Central Highlands. That area was the responsibility of the 2d ARVN Corps commanded by MG Phu, who had gained a solid reputation as the commander of the highly regarded 1st Infantry Division. The enemy achieved total surprise and a quick decisive victory at Ban Me Thuot because of their clever deceptions and General Phu's stubbornly held, but wrong, preconceptions. When Thieu ordered a hasty and "secret" evacuation of the highlands, Phu compounded a bad situation with a worse decision. What little he did was wrong. He turned the planning and execution of the withdrawal - a most complicated and difficult operation - over to his chief of staff and immediately flew off to his coastal headquarters to "plan the counterattack." (He became a cipher in the ensuing drama.) His Chief of Staff came up with a bold, if impractical and uncoordinated, plan, after which he had the Ranger Group Commander promoted so that he could turn command of the "Race to the Sea" over to the new brigadier. The chief of staff then flew out to join his commander and also faded away. The resulting annihilation of the 2d Corps, the single worst



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defeat in RVNAF's 20-year history, was the logical outcome of extremely poor planning and unexpectedly weak and incompetent leadership. The collapse in the center, the rendering of RVN in two, and the poorly conceived and often countermanded orders by Thieu, when coupled with the PAVN power and dash, defeated the morale, will and cohesion of I corps before another major battle was fought; even Gen. Trong's leadership and determination were incapable of preventing the disintegration of his corps.37/

### 8. The Verdict

In analyzing the long, costly, and lost war in Vietnam for key "lessons," senior RVNAF officers concluded that their command and control arrangements were far from the best available for the dual-faced nature of the conflict. Territorial control demanded continuity and stability while the "Big War" required rapid mobility and concentration. The earlier solution of having military regions and corps independently responsible for the same territory had been found wanting. The compromise adopted, at US request, of placing the corps in charge of both missions was also a faulty one; both the span of control and the scope of the responsibilities were too broad. What then might have worked better? Generals Vien and Khuyen conclude that:

The best solution in our judgment would have been to realign our territorial organization into seven or nine military regions, each controlling from five to seven sectors. The best employment of our nine [later 11] infantry divisions would have been to maintain them in a general reserve status and alternately assign them as required to military regions for the conduct of pacification operations within a specific and temporary area of tactical responsibility.38/

They suggested further that there was a need for up to three fully mobile corps headquarters which could be assigned temporary missions, areas of operations and forces as required.

Whether this solution would have improved RVNAF's effectiveness significantly in both areas must remain a matter of conjecture, but it is not difficult to conclude that the scheme had potential. By itself, of course, it would not materially improve unity of effort between the various allied forces.

No organizational arrangement, however, will work well with weak and/or incompetent commanders and staffs. Although RVNAF eventually produced a number of good and some outstanding officers, poor leadership and staff work were more the norm than the exception up to and including the fall of Saigon.39/

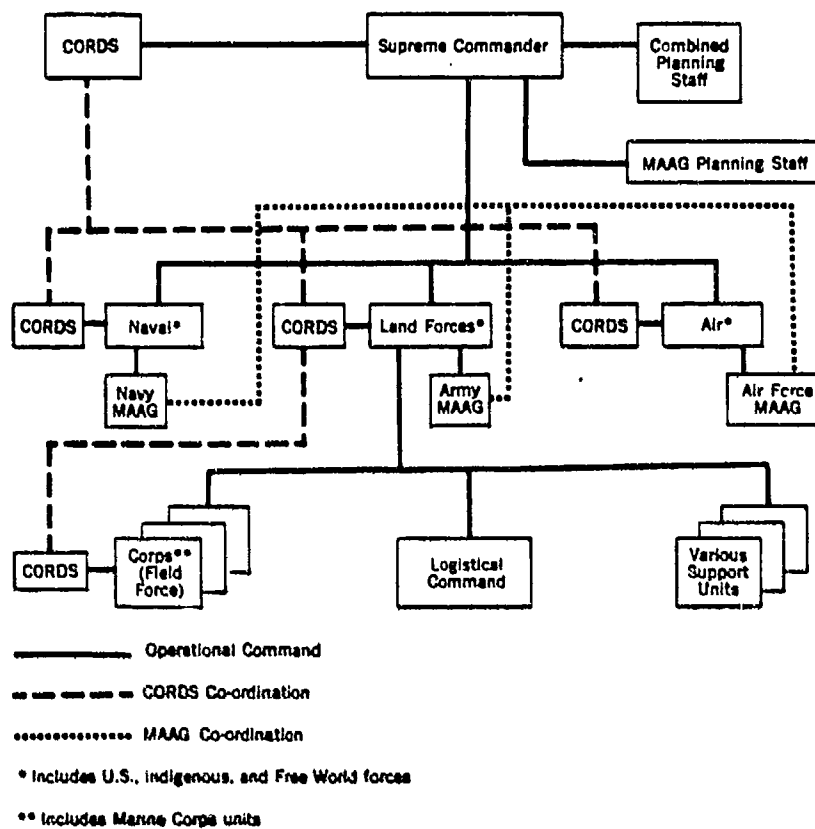
#### D. COALITION WAR AND COMBINED COMMAND

Issue: Should there have been a combined command established to control all allied forces (US, RVN, ROK, etc.) fighting in the Second Indochinese War? If so, when to establish and who to command? If not, what was the best available substitute?

##### 1. Model for the Future

In the final chapter of his analysis of command and control instruments employed in Vietnam, General Eckhardt suggested several alternative models for coordinating any future limited coalition war: (See Figure 11-5)

Initially, the unified command (theater headquarters) should exercise operational control over forces provided by the host government. This command should also have operational control over military forces furnished by allied nations. The prototype of this arrangement is found in the Korean War. As an alternative, the unified command might only exercise control of US and other outside forces committed to the theater. The degree of control over indigenous forces could be modified according to political circumstances but should be great enough to ensure prompt development of the ability of these forces to undertake unilateral operations successfully.40/



4541/75W

SOURCE: MG George Eckhardt, Command and Control, 1950-1969

Figure 11-5. Proposed Command and Control Arrangements

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This proposal displays clear lines of responsibility and authority, and thus is attractive to experienced soldiers, but would such an arrangement have been practical in the unique political military environment of Vietnam?

### 2. Historical Precedents

Coalition wars have always been difficult to coordinate and prosecute. Napoleon, for one, said that he would rather fight against than with a coalition. He did both, and until he became ill and lazy, he usually did better fighting alone. His defeat at Waterloo was due to his own errors and to the stubborn bravery of the loosely coordinated allied commanders and their troops.

The US has fought five major coalition wars and all but the last were won; each was controlled in a different manner. (The NATO command, established in peacetime as a counter to the USSR, was a "first" for the US.)

- Revolutionary War. The French Fleet under De Grasse, and the French Army commanded by Rochambeau, were decisive in breaking the stalemate by cooperating with Washington in capturing Cornwallis' Army at Yorktown. Ironically, and perhaps luckily, Washington's later warning about "entangling alliances" helped shape our foreign and military policies for over a century.
- World War I. The US, a belated and junior partner of the allies, fought to keep her units together under national control; for the most part so did the others for almost four costly years. German General von Ludendorff's final offensive in the spring of 1918, was designed to split the British and French Armies and then to defeat them in detail. It came close enough to its aim to frighten the allies into appointing a generalissimo - the French Marshal Foch. Russia fought and fell alone.
- World War II. Like its predecessor, this war started off badly. Although the British and French had conducted some staff planning as Hitler's intentions became obvious and ominous, the allies still remained a loose coalition; as neutrals, Belgium and

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Holland were fearful of provoking the Germans, and so kept their own counsel. Poland was crushed with no real assistance from the others. In May 1940, the German armored thrust through the "impassable" Ardennes split the allies who retreated - or surrendered - along nationally motivated lines. The forced entry of Russia and later the US into the war shifted the balance of power against the Axis Powers. The allies - or at least the British and Americans - finally had learned a lesson. Despite his lack of command and combat experience, Eisenhower was selected to head the main forces of the Western Allies. He forged a remarkably cohesive and effective combined staff, though not without initially applying a great deal of heat. National pride and honest differences still created periodic flare-ups as to strategy and about who was to command what. In the Pacific, however, it was a different story: King, Nimitz and MacArthur ensured that this remained an American War. Stalin didn't trust his allies, and in China, both Chiang and Mao were preserving their strength for their post-war intramural clash. The war was won more through sheer power than through coordinated strategies.

- The Korean War. The ROK constabulary-type force would have been crushed in short order if the US had not intervened militarily on a large scale. Under the aegis of the UN's Security Council, the US Joint Chiefs of Staff were the "executive agents" charged with prosecuting the war. MacArthur, and his successors, exercised firm operational control of all indigenous, US, and other UN forces. This tidy and effective command arrangement has been cited by some as the "the model" that should have been employed in Vietnam.
- Vietnam. The non-indigenous allies in that conflict were numerically stronger, fought over twice as long, suffered more casualties, were more dispersed and were opposed by a smaller enemy force, than was the case in Korea. The Free World Military Assistance Forces (FWMAF) were interspersed throughout RVN, with

the local soldiery. Plans were made and battles fought through the medium of cooperation and coordination. The reasons for and the results of this inherently fragile method of controlling allied forces provide the analytical focus for this section. (See Figure 11-6).

3. Vietnam Was Unique

The overriding US objective in RVN was to assist RVN to achieve a status as a free, independent, viable non-communist nation-state: the Indochinese "brick" in our "wall" of containment. Since the DRV's Lao Dong Party (ex-Viet Minh, etc) had preempted and maintained a near monopoly on the nationalism issue, it seemed essential that the US mitigate the dual charges of neo-colonialism and imperialism. Regardless of US intentions and actions, however, those charges were made and amplified by the NLF, the DRV, communist governments everywhere, many "neutrals" and even by a growing number of antiwar elements in the US. If the US had insisted that GVN place its armed forces under MACV operational control, the charges would have been "proved" before the "court of international opinion."

Additionally, the nature of the conflict was such - a nationwide mix of internal and external political and military pressures - that US control of military operations would not have solved, and might have compounded, more intricate and delicate territorial (population) security and pacification problems which required centralized control but physical dispersion.

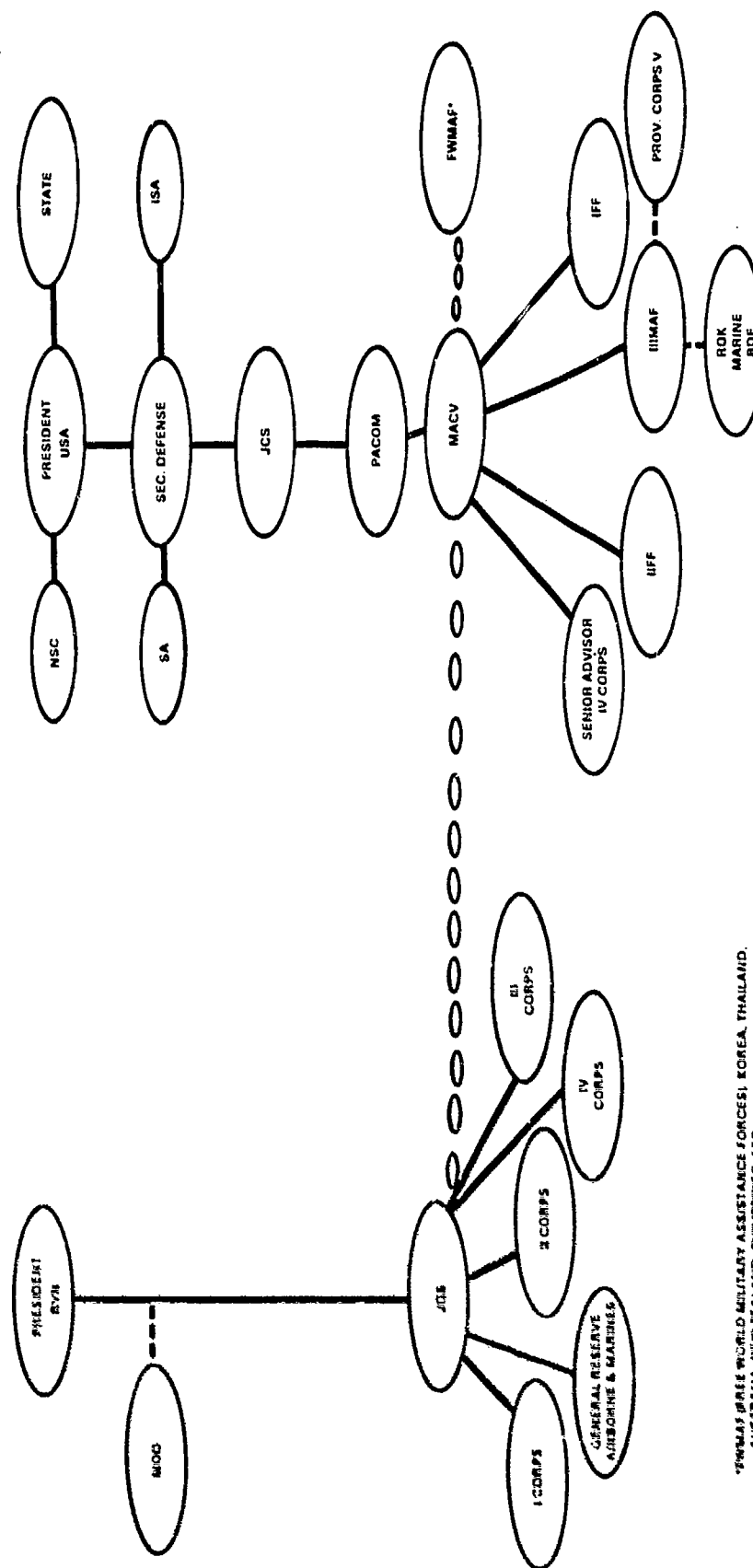
The motivation and attitude of our allies in Vietnam also were different than they were during the Korean War; e.g., there was much less of a "crusade" spirit. This factor influenced to a degree the decision on how to organize for that later conflict.

4. The Case for and Against a Combined Command

a. The Situation

Even before the overthrow of Diem a number of people in the USG became disenchanted with the GVN and RVNAF ability to prosecute the war effectively; after Diem's murder the generals became even more politicized and even less effective militarily. One JCS memorandum in January 1964,

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\*FWMAF HAS WORLD MILITARY ASSISTANCE FORCES, KOREA, THAILAND, AUSTRALIA, NEW ZEALAND, PHILIPPINES, ETC

--- COOPERATION AND COORDINATION

== OPERATIONAL CONTROL

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Figure 11-6. Ground War in RVN, March 1968

suggested that the senior US officer in RVN (COMUSMACV) take temporary charge of all tactical operations.<sup>41/</sup> That course of action was rejected after the top US officials in Saigon strongly objected to it as psychologically self-defeating.<sup>42/</sup> By the spring of 1965 the political and military situations in RVN had deteriorated to the point where even Ambassador Taylor reluctantly agreed that US ground forces were necessary to avoid the defeat of RVN and US aims in Southeast Asia. US pressure was applied on US allies, especially in Asia, to get "more flags" into the conflict. The altered situation required that a decision be reached on how to coordinate the various national forces.

b. The Case for a Combined Command

1) Unity of Effort

Unity of effort is assisted - but not assured - by unity of command.

2) Political <sup>43/</sup>

- President Johnson demanded positive results, fast. USG officials had long since become thoroughly disenchanted with GVN and RVNAF leadership. US "know how", experience and drive would have better coordinated and expedited plans and programs.
- Such a move would have placed an unknown degree of restraints on RVNAF generals and might have helped in weaning them from political competition and have hindered coup plotting.
- If RVNAF had been placed under MACV control, the other allies might also have agreed to serve under US leadership in a combined command.
- More extensive and visible employment of RVNAF with US units during the "big battles" (1965-69) could have resulted in fewer American casualties, and a lessening of the widespread impression that US soldiers were fighting and dying while the South Vietnamese were sitting on the sidelines.

3) Military <sup>44/</sup>

- Any well trained (educated) military man recognizes the need for and the benefits of unity of command. (History shows, however,



that this basic principle is violated often for national, service, or even personal reasons).

- A combined command would have facilitated the planning and execution of SEATO and US war plans for the area.
- A single, clear chain of command facilitates (at least theoretically) the achievement of other military imperatives such as: mass, economy of force, flexibility, maneuver, etc. Even among national forces, control by "cooperation and coordination" is usually slow, awkward, often irritating and subject to mediocre compromise. Among allies the problems naturally multiply.
- Solid US planning, dynamic leadership, and abundant resources probably would have increased the effectiveness and the morale of RVNAF and some of the other allied troops; on the average their soldiers were excellent raw material.
- US control of planning, operations and support activities would have provided closer command observation of and leverage over RVNAF officers to include the selection and grooming of the better ones and the relief of the more incompetent and/or corrupt.

4) Economic 45/

A fully integrated command structure would have created the opportunity to pare down or eliminate some of the numerous and often redundant headquarters and support units and facilities. Collocation and common use of material and facilities would have been both more attractive and feasible. US-controlled support activities would have been more responsive and efficient.

5) Pacification and Vietnamization 46/

The opportunity would have existed to initiate both of these essential programs earlier, and to have conducted them more efficiently. (By the time they were well under way and showing positive results, time had run out for the USG.)

6) Timing 47/

In 1965 both GVN and RVNAF were extremely weak and vulnerable. The intervention of substantial US and other allied forces provided the only clear opportunity for the US to press for a combined command - or at least for the operational control of RVNAF et al. MACV did make a low-key gambit on the subject but quickly pigeonholed the issue when resistance was met. At that low point, however, neither GVN nor JGS possessed any "blue chips" except their pride and our desire to get on with the war.

c. The Case Against A Combined Command

1) Unity of Effort 48/

A number of Vietnam-experienced senior US officers concluded that even with a formal unified command arrangement the actual way of doing business would not have changed significantly; political realities and national and personal sensitivities would have led to case by case "negotiations" and compromises with our allies.

2) Political 49/

- Historically, Vietnamese were a self-respecting people, and were very sensitive about even the appearance of domination by any foreign power. They also were proud of their newly gained independence.
- The DRV/NLF played hard, and generally successfully, on the "puppet" and "neo-colonialist" themes both in country and on the world stage. If the US have been granted overall command of RVNAF, such charges would have been even more difficult to refute.
- The USG frequently stated that its intent was to help GVN/RVNAF to stand eventually on their own feet. Assuming control of all military activities in RVN would have been counter to that policy.
- Most of the other allies in the conflict were also proud and sensitive people and wanted to avoid the label of US "mercenaries"; on its first foreign military adventure the ROK wanted

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equal status with RVNAF. The Australians and New Zealanders were more pragmatic, more politically-militarily mature and accepted no US grants.

- It would have been impossible, due to internal US politics and military realities, for the control of US units to have been exercised by Vietnamese or Korean officers.

### 3) Military 50/

- As discussed earlier, there were a number of potential advantages to a US-run combined command. But the political-social environment in RVN, the nature of the conflict, and the leadership deficiencies in GVN and RVNAF would have tended to seriously erode attempts at increasing efficiency and cracking down on graft.
- Most RVNAF officers serving with and under US commanders and staff heads probably would have been shunted aside, and thus would lose "face", self-confidence, and initiative.
- Yet equity and justice would have required the US to designate certain key command and staff positions for RVNAF and other allied officers. There would exist the possibility that both efficiency and security would suffer. (The one-year tour for US officers would have exacerbated that situation.)
- Probably the greatest military danger of a combined command/staff arrangement would have been the even more widespread and deeper implantation of extravagant US ways and means; even without the severe congressional cuts in aid monies, there probably would have been a cumulative reduction of firepower, mobility, logistics, communications, etc. As events transpired, RVNAF proved to be incapable of fighting a "poor man's war."

### 4) Pacification and Vietnamization 51/

- A prerequisite to Pacification was territorial and population security, which was the primary mission of local forces. If the US had assumed direct control over the regional/territorial forces (RF, PF, and PSDF) it would have involved US commanders

and staffs directly in local politics. Decisions would have been made and implemented on matters which very few US officers were qualified for or interested in. Despite its genuine accomplishments, the CORDS advisory organization created GVN organizations and programs which couldn't survive long after US withdrawal.

- Although the physical aspects of Vietnamization could have progressed faster and more efficiently under a US-dominated combined command, the end result could well have been a finer castle built on more sand. Quite likely the RVNAF would have become even more dependent on the US (advice, aid, methods, etc) and would have been progressively weakened as that foundation eroded.

5. The US Decision

MACV had given some consideration to a possible combined command set up in 1964 - a sound military precaution.<sup>52/</sup> After the US Marines landed at Da Nang in March 1965, then BG Gen William De Puy, J3 of MACV, had a lengthy discussion about the future with his JGS counterpart, General Thang. The latter broached the possibility of the need in the future for a combined US/RVNAF command; but he also feared that VNAF was already too dependent on the US.<sup>53/</sup>

General Westmoreland carefully weighed the pros and cons of various command arrangements and reasoned that:

The coming of more American troops and Free World (or "Third Country," as opposed to South Vietnam and the United States) forces inevitably raised the question of command arrangements. How to obtain the unity of command that military history through the years has shown to be essential? Should I press for a combined US-South Vietnamese-Third Country staff? A South Vietnamese or an American commander? The United States would hardly sanction placing its troops under the South Vietnamese, yet the South Vietnamese for their part were just as sensitive. Having so recently achieved independence, they were jealous of their sovereignty while at the same time wary of providing any verisimilitude to Communist charges that they were puppets of the United States. No parallel with the situation during the Korean War existed, for even though the overall command in Korea was essentially

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American, it was under the aegis of the United Nations, which had no role in Vietnam.54/

General Westmoreland did retain James L. Collins at MACV to explore the possibility of establishing a small combined planning staff for international matters. The Collins mission became known to JGS and the Saigon press; the reactions of both were quite negative. Based on this feedback, Gen. Westmoreland decided to shelve the scheme.

Convinced that we could continue to handle command that way, avoiding puppetry or proconsulship with only minimal loss of the advantages of unified command, I dropped the concept of a formal unified command while retaining Jimmy Collins as my liaison with the Vietnamese Joint General Staff. Although the subject of combined command continued to arise from time to time, I have no reason to regret my decision and seriously question whether formal combined command would have been practically workable. I never encountered serious disagreement with senior South Vietnamese officers, and experienced but one at lower levels, that could not be solved by frank discussion. In the final analysis, I had the leverage to influence the South Vietnamese and they knew it, and both sides exercised a rare degree of tact. Meanwhile, the South Vietnamese were able to develop their own command channels and obtain the experience with command that is essential if a military force is ever to stand alone. In effect, we achieved unity of command within the context of national sensitivities and our training mission.55/

After a visit to RVN to December 1965, General Harold K. Johnson, Chief of Staff of the Army, reflected that:

Command arrangements still must be solved. . . . I see no easy solution to this problem and it is one with which we must be prepared to cope on a case-by-case basis as the situation develops in South Vietnam.56/

Several years later a veteran advisor, John Paul Vann, repeated his often-stated recommendation that the US take over control of the fighting and pacification through one of several possible schemes.57/ Nothing of substance came of that suggestion, at least on the military side.

6. The Compromise Solutions. A selective sample:

"Cooperation and coordination" became the name of the game. To coordinate major policies with the largest allied forces, MACV established a Free World Military Assistance Council. Gen Cao Van Vien, Chief of the JGS, was its chairman and Generals Westmoreland and Chae (commander of ROKF-V) were the other members, although it served a political-psychological role, its military value was minimal.58/

A combined Campaign Plan (CCP) was a coordinating document published yearly. Its actual value has been questioned by both US and RVNAF commanders.59/

The senior US officer in each RVN corps area was also the principal advisor to the Vietnamese Corps Commander (the exception was the Mekong Delta which had few US combat troops.) As a rule this relationship was cordial, formal, but not overly productive. The US commander had his hands full with his own tactical, logistical, and administrative problems as did his counterpart; in addition, the latter had vast political and economic responsibilities.60/

Tactical Areas of Responsibility (TAOR) were established to sort out where each of the national and international forces was to operate. Although changeable by mutual consent, these TAOR generally remained fixed, which was an advantage often exploited by the enemy. Additionally, this system complicated the territorial missions of the province and district chiefs.61/

The only combined staffs organized were in the intelligence field such as the Combined Centers for Intelligence, Interrogation, and Document and Materiel Exploitation. (See Chapter 9). In particular the Combined Intelligence Center, Vietnam (CICV) in Saigon was an impressive show place and performed useful functions. Yet it lacked a number of essential ingredients such as certain Vietnamese and US intelligence capabilities and inputs; for example, too little was known about the enemy in North Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia.62/

COMUSMACV made frequent visits to the field and thus was able to view and alleviate a number of the problems associated with the unusual coordination-cooperation command arrangement.

7. The Balance Sheet

- If a combined command was to be established, 1965 was the time to press for one.
- The political-psychological atmosphere and the nature of the conflict were not conducive for such an arrangement; nor was the Vietnamese war comparable with the war in Korea.<sup>63/</sup>
- If a combined command had been established it probably would not appreciably have changed the actual day-to-day working arrangements, and the maturation of RVNAF commanders probably would have been curbed even further; the weaning process (Vietnamization) would have been even more difficult and painful.
- MACV possessed sufficient leverage to exercise the amount of control deemed necessary; whether it exerted such leverage often or well enough is a matter of conjecture.<sup>64/</sup>
- Although "unmilitary", inefficient and costly, cooperation and coordination provided sufficient "glue" to hold the allied forces together given the circumstances; while substantial US power was available the enemy was never strong enough to exploit fully the inherent weaknesses of that cooperative command arrangement.
- A US-dominated command might have alleviated but would never have solved the basic problems and contradictions inherent in GVN and RVNAF. (See Chapter 7, Vol. II, "Constraints")
- There would have existed additional rationale for a combined command if SEATO had been involved in the conflict, and if old French Indochina and Thailand had been treated as a single theater of war.
- These essentially negative conclusions concerning a combined command were based on the unique environment of the Vietnam conflict, but in no way invalidate the sound principle of unity of command/effort; the probable benefits to be gained from insisting on US control would have been marginal when compared with the likely internal and external "costs" of such a war.

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- Figure 11-7 is a simplified summary of the case for and against a combined command.

### 8. The Bottom Line

If rigid adherence to basic principles - such as unity of command - will create as many or more problems than theoretically will be solved, then they must be judiciously modified to meet the actual operating environment; this conclusion presumes a detailed and balanced comprehension of the key factors which impact on each specific environment. The newly created and still evolving Combined Forces Command (CFC) in the Republic of Korea (1979) was formed only after a thorough analysis of the nature of the potential conflict, the enemy, our ally, and of US objectives. Earlier the NATO command structure had been established on the basis of the political-military imperatives existing in the US and Western Europe, and has been modified gradually as that environment changed.

After reflecting about the causes of the lost war, two ex-RVNAF generals came up with a concept for controlling such a complex coalition war:

The lack of a combined organization to conduct the war was another shortcoming. Because of the common goal of both governments and combined war efforts, at least some form of "Allied War Council" would have been desirable. This council would be co-chaired by the RVN President and the U.S. Ambassador, including as members all the cabinet ministers and the Chief, JGS on the RVN side and all the heads of US agencies and the MACV commander on the US side. The US Ambassador in particular would be the sole authority responsible for the conduct of the war in coordination with the RVN President and in full control of all US military and civilian agencies in South Vietnam. All plans and policies of the council, the highest war control organization, would be bilingual and signed by the co-chairmen in order to achieve unity in strategy and totality of war efforts.65/

This concept is based more firmly on the realities of the political-military conflict in Vietnam than in General Eckhardt's and would have provided a medium for high level US and GVN cooperation. Alone,



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## ISSUE: A COMBINED COMMAND, OR NOT?

<u>FACTORS</u>	<u>FOR</u>	<u>AGAINST</u>
1. <u>PRECEDENTS</u>	WWII AND KOREA	AMERICAN REVOLUTION AND WATERLOO
2. <u>POLITICAL</u>		
• <u>US</u>	YES, BUT <u>NOT</u> WITH RVNAF CDR	VERY SENSITIVE ABOUT "PUPPET" AND "NEO COLONIAL" ISSUES.
• <u>RVN</u>		
• <u>ALLIES</u>	MOST RECOGNIZED BENEFITS <u>BUT</u>	SENSITIVE, ESPECIALLY ROK'S EXCELLENT PROPAGANDA WEAPON
• <u>ENEMY</u>		"PROOF" THAT IT WAS A US WAR
• <u>WORLD</u>		
3. <u>MILITARY</u>		
• <u>UNITY</u>	SOUNDEST APPROACH	
• <u>MASS</u>	MORE AND FASTER	
• <u>MANEUVER</u>	SPEEDIER AND BETTER	
• <u>FLEXIBILITY</u>	SEVERAL-FOLD INCREASE	
• <u>SURPRISE</u>		JGS AND RVNAF INFILTRATED BY ENEMY
• <u>CONTROL</u>	TIGHTER	
• <u>PLANNING</u>	MORE EFFICIENT AND EFFECTIVE	
• <u>MORALE</u>	GOOD FOR SOLDIERS <u>BUT</u>	OFFICERS LOSE "FACE" AND CONFIDENCE
• <u>LEADERS</u>	BETTER FOR SELECTION, TRAINING AND "FIRING" <u>BUT</u>	THEY BECOME US "BOYS"
• <u>SUPPORT</u>	CHEAPER, AND BETTER	
• <u>TRAINING</u>	MORE OJT FOR RVNAF	
4. <u>PSYCHOLOGICAL</u>	A PLUS FOR US IF SOLID <u>BUT</u> PROGRESS ACHIEVED AND US CASUALTIES REDUCED	PROBABLY MORE HARM THAN GOOD FOR RVN OVER LONG RUN
5. <u>ECONOMIC</u>	SOME SAVINGS PROBABLE	
6. <u>PACIFICATION</u>	MORE EFFICIENT <u>BUT</u>	TOO MUCH US AND TOO LITTLE RVN
7. <u>"VIETNAMIZATION"</u>	EARLIER AND SOUNDER <u>BUT</u>	RVNAF MORE "SPOILED"
8. <u>ON BALANCE</u>	MUCH MORE EFFECTIVE <u>BUT</u> WHILE US ACTIVELY INVOLVED	RVNAF EVEN MORE DEPENDENT ON EXPENSIVE AND SOMETIMES IRRELEVANT "WAY OF WAR"
9. <u>FEASIBILITY</u>	POSSIBLE WHEN RVN WEAKEST (1965) <u>BUT</u>	THE POLITICAL-PSYCHOLOGICAL COSTS WOULD HAVE BEEN TOO HEAVY
10. <u>COMMENT:</u>	COMMAND AND CONTROL ARRANGEMENTS WERE WEAK AND INEFFICIENT, BUT WERE <u>NOT</u> THE MAJOR REASONS FOR THE LOSS OF THE WAR.	

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Figure 11-7. Command and Control in RVN

however, it would not have solved a number of the more intractable problems which faced the US and the RVN during the conflict, but it would have been worth a real test.

E. THE US ORGANIZES FOR WAR IN INDOCHINA

Issue: Should the US have organized a joint Southeast Asia Command (SEACOM) covering all of French Indochina and Thailand? If so, should it have responded directly to the JCS?

1. A Unified Command?

This issue has been raised by a number of participants in, and close observers of, the Second Indochina War. Among them was General George Eckhardt who, while reflecting on future requirements, recommended that:

A unified theater command directly under the Joint Chiefs of Staff should be established to conduct military operations. Other unified or specified commands may be assigned supporting missions depending on the type of conflict. The theater commander should have powers comparable to those exercised by supreme commanders in Europe and the Pacific during World War II.66/

This section will examine the major reasons why the US organized as it did (to include a brief historical survey), some of the problems created by that posture, and the more likely costs and benefits of a SEACOM reporting to the JCS.

2. The US and Joint Warfare

- In the Civil War the Union Navy and Army, of necessity and with common sense, cooperated closely in the riverine campaigns which eventually split the Confederacy and opened the way to the deep South.
- Prior to World War II, the Army and Navy were still reporting independently to the Commander-in-Chief. A small Joint Army-Navy Board existed to coordinate war plans, but it had no control or supervising authority.67/

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- After US entry into World War II, it became essential to establish an ad hoc joint group to meet as equals with the British Chiefs of Staff Committees; that was the informal beginning of the US Joint Chiefs of Staff.68/
- Based on experience in joint (and coalition) war, the National Security Act (NSA) of 1947 established the Department of Defense (DOD) and provided the formal basis for joint warfare doctrine.
- The Korean War demonstrated some continuing shortcomings in structure and practice, to include the quite independent attitude of General MacArthur. The 1953 amendment of the NSA strengthened civilian control over the military, and that of 1958 established authority of the regional Commanders-in-Chief (CINC's).69/

### 3. The Theater(s) of War

The Indochinese area of operations was viewed differently by the key participants. CINCPAC, from his Hawaiian vantage point, viewed the entire PACOM area of responsibility as a potential theater of war, with the PRC as the major long-term threat. He also naturally tended to regard military matters from the maritime perspective. For these reasons he insisted that Indochina was only one segment of the possible conflict arenas. Based on this logic CINCPAC believed that he needed direct control of all US forces and resources in the area so that they could be shifted as required by the threats and US strategy.70/

The DRV viewed Indochina as a strategic entity, as did MACV. Whatever happened in North Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia, sooner or later had an impact on the situation in South Vietnam.71/

Those in Washington who desired to keep tight limits on and control of the conflict found the separate military assistance command useful, even if frustrating. Since there was no single, powerful supreme commander in the area, the US executive branch found it easier to maintain close reins on the air war over North Vietnam and Laos. The State Department retained significant influence over the conduct of segments of the war through the US ambassadors in the region, including the ambassador to Thailand.

4. Fragmentation of the War(s)

Primarily for both internal and external political reasons, the USG permitted the Second Indochina War to be controlled and fought in geographic segments: the RVN and some adjacent territorial strips, most of the DRV, Laos proper and the panhandle, and Cambodia (off and on).

- The initial US military assistance in the area was overwatched by MAAG Indochina, which meshed with the French organization and the scope of the conflict. The Geneva Accords and the subsequent withdrawal of the French forces rendered the regional MAAG irrelevant.
- In early 1962 the JCS proposed that a unified US command be established in RVN that would report directly to them. CINCPAC, then Admiral Felt, disagreed and was supported by the State Department; CINCPAC remained in the chain of command.72/
- For a period, General Harkins was Commander of both MACV and MACTHAI with a senior deputy in Bangkok; that arrangement was suitable for the control of US and SEATO contingency plans for the area. Ambassador Graham Martin's views of Thai sensitivity, however, influenced the USG to surrender the link between the two commands in 1965.73/
- When General Maxwell Taylor arrived in Saigon in 1964 as the US Ambassador to RVN, he was not pleased with the degree of coordination between the US Embassies and MAAGs in the region, so he established an informal Southeast Asia Coordinating Committee (SEACoord). Although the regional US ambassadors met periodically, General Taylor later declared that the results were not great.74/
- After MACV was "divorced" from MACTHAI, the coordination of US efforts in Southeast Asia should have been carried out by CINCPAC or in Washington. The initiative was taken in Saigon, however. General Westmoreland stated:

To obviate the tedious procedure, Alexis Johnson and I promoted an informal Southeast Asia co-ordinating committee composed of the heads of mission in South Vietnam, Laos, and Thailand. The Group met at irregular intervals either in Vietnam or Thailand.75/

That informal method of coordination was rather typical of the ad hoc control mechanisms employed by the US throughout the conflict.

5. Two Views on a SEACOM

• Admiral Sharp as CINCPAC:

No discussion of command relations in the Pacific during that period would be complete without considering whether the U.S. Military Assistance Command in Vietnam should have been designated a unified command, reporting directly to the JCS. This subject came up many times over the years, and the pros and cons have been hashed out ad infinitum. It would have required that the functions and capabilities provided by CINCPAC and his component commanders in Honolulu be duplicated in Saigon, which would in turn have meant a large increase in staff and facilities in Saigon at a time when COMUSMACV was completely occupied with the operational job at hand. Needless to say, there have been volumes written on this subject. My opinion was then, and is now, that the arrangements we had were the best possible under the circumstances.76/

• General Westmoreland as COMUSMACV:

Creating a unified command for all of Southeast Asia would have gone a long way toward mitigating the unprecedented centralization of authority in Washington and the preoccupation with minutiae at the Washington level. A unified commander provided with broad policy guidance and a political adviser would have obviated the bureaucratic wrangles that raged in Washington and resulted in military decisions strongly influenced by civilian officials who, however well-intentioned, lacked military expertise either from experience or study. Instead of five "commanders" - CINCPAC, COMUSMACV, and the American ambassadors to Thailand, Laos, and South Vietnam - there would have been one man directly answerable to the President, on everything. Although that kind of organization might have created ripples within service-conscious Joint Chiefs of Staff, the Joint Chiefs traditionally fall in line when the

Commander in Chief speaks. Such an arrangement would have eliminated the problem of co-ordination between the air and ground wars that was inevitable with CINCPAC managing one, MACV the other.77/

6. Other Views and Factors

a. Favoring SEACOM

- Such a command would have been consistent with US doctrine, which was derived from experience in several wars.
- SEATO and many US contingency plans were based on a single theater of war command structure. (Although none of the former and few of the latter were ever executed, JCS and MACV retained hope that permission would be granted to employ considerable ground forces against the enemy sanctuaries and LOC in Laos, Cambodia, and even North Vietnam).78/
- The military factors favoring a combined command (See Section D) also favored a unified SEACOM, while most of the international political impediments would have been irrelevant.
- Centralized control of US airpower would have been facilitated (See Section F).
- A SEACOM would have provided the opportunity for pulling together and harmonizing all US intelligence assets in the region--a much needed reform.79/
- It might have produced the impetus to create an organized body in Washington charged with coordinating and overwatching all USG efforts.80/
- Technically, the communications systems were capable of transmitting adequate and timely data and instructions directly between Washington and Saigon.
- Establishing such a command would have been an essential first step towards a combined command or some lesser arrangement to coordinate better the various allied efforts.
- The ground operations in RVN and the air campaigns in the rest of Indochina could have been more closely synchronized to achieve both political and military goals.81/

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- From the White House and OSD point of view, it would have removed CINCPAC as an obstacle or irritant.82/
- b. Against a SEACOM
- Such a command would have made it more difficult for the USG to convince internal and external critics that the real US goal was merely to preserve an independent and free RVN.83/
- A single US command likely would have created political and psychological problems for the Thais, Laotians, and Cambodians.84/
- The US Ambassadors to the countries involved (especially in RVN) would have lost power and influence to the unified military command; the President probably would have to choose between the Secretaries of State and Defense.85/
- A single, powerful, "war lord" for the region might have constrained the close control of the operations by the JCS, Secretary of Defense, and even the President.86/
- A SEACOM would have inhibited PACOM's freedom of action and shifting resources to meet other threats in the Pacific.87/ (As events transpired, this was not necessary except for the Pueblo crisis).
- The span of control of a CINCSEACOM (COMUSSEASIA) would have been quite extensive; as a result he probably would have been forced to relinquish direct control of operations to component commanders in order to concentrate on political and strategic matters. In turn, RVNAF probably would have been pressured to establish a subordinate headquarters to control ground operations.
- The "fight" to create a SEACOM would have brought to the surface the conflicting service doctrines and their inherent parochialism. The President would have had to referee, which he didn't care to do; members and committees of Congress also might have become involved.
- CINCPAC usually supported the MACV position on key issues - a valuable ally, but a potentially formidable competitor.88/

- If placed in a supporting role to SEACOM, PACOM and its subordinate headquarters might have given the new command less support as they concentrated on their other full time responsibilities.
- It is quite possible that Washington would have exercised tighter control of ground operations if there was a single commander responsible for the region; whether such control (or interference) would have been for good or ill is a matter of conjecture, but without doubt it would have been resented by the commander on the spot.89/

7. The Verdict

a. The US command structure for Southeast Asia violated the sound principle of unity and was inefficient and costly.90/

b. Whether CINCPAC was a help or a hindrance to COMUSMACV often depended largely on whether the personalities and styles of the two commanders meshed or clashed. If both worked closely and well together, even an inferior command set up could be made to work, but the reverse is equally true.

- In his report on his stewardship of MACV, General Westmoreland commented on the dual command structure:

On the surface, this would seem to be a complicated arrangement fraught with potential difficulties. In practice, however, the system worked well principally because of the judicious and skillful assignment of priorities by Admiral Sharp, Commander in Chief, Pacific. Throughout the four and one-half years of my service in Vietnam, Admiral Sharp provided counsel and support which were invaluable to me and to the war effort. His management and direction of complex and interrelated air and naval operations were made vastly easier and more effective by the high professional competence of the successive naval and air commanders involved.91/

- When Admiral Harry Felt was CINCPAC, it was perceived both in PACOM and in Washington, that he was unduly interfering in



details beyond his competence.92/ In a later stage, General Abrams determined that it was more important that his views coincide with those of Ambassador Bunker than with those of his nominal military superior, Admiral McCain.93/

- CINCPAC was too far from Washington to be fully sensitive to political imperatives and too far from Saigon to get an accurate "feel" for the battle. The component commands (PACFLT, PACAF, ARPAC and FMFPAC) could have performed their support functions without being in the chain of command.94/
- The White House and the civilians in OSD considered CINCPAC unimportant with respect to operations inside of the RVN, and often bypassed him. General Wheeler, as CJCS, tried to keep CINCPAC fully informed, although he too often dealt directly with COMUSMACV; the Washington-Saigon direct link was exercised most often during periods of crisis, such as during Tet '68, and the siege of Khe Sanh.95/
- If the USG had insisted on a SEACOM, the Thais probably would have cooperated because of their SEATO ties while the Laotians and the Cambodians (under Sihanouk) could not publicly have supported such a command.96/
- The 1978 Steadman study of The National Military Command Structure recognized the impact of changing personalities and environments on the command structure and therefore stressed flexibility; i.e., in any future crisis or conflict in Korea, the line of authority could reach directly from Washington to the US (Combined Forces) commander in ROK or through CINCPAC.97/ The current "tilt" in DOD appears to be towards the former.
- General Eckhardt's previously quoted recommendation that future unified theater commanders be granted powers equivalent to those exercised by Eisenhower, MacArthur and Nimitz in World War II is militarily sound but politically unrealistic. Because of the ubiquitous threat of nuclear World War III, it is quite unlikely that any US Commander-in-Chief will ever again delegate such

discretion and power to the field. Modern technology, to include real-time communications, make it possible to exercise much tighter control from Washington.

8. On Balance

General Westmoreland concluded that the possible gains to be exacted from a SEACOM were not worth the probable cost of interservice, interagency, and international "battles" which would have caused serious but not mortal "wounds."<sup>98/</sup> (See Figure 11-8). He may have been correct, but that judgment should not be granted undue weight during deliberations on how best to organize for a future conflict in a different environment.

The US fragmented its limited war assets over four "theaters," while the enemy fought a total war in a single theater.

F. CONTROL OF US AIRPOWER

Issue: Was centralized control of US airpower in Southeast Asia both essential and achievable? If so, why did it take so long to achieve "single managership" and at what costs?

1. Historical Setting

The original US military aircraft were considered as the modernized counterpart of the Civil War balloons, and thus were employed to observe, and report; as such they were assigned to the US Army Signal Corps. During World War I, however, their numbers, capabilities, and missions were increased dramatically to include strafing, bombing and air-to-air combat.

Between wars visionary advocates of airpower, such as the Italian Douhet and the American Billy Mitchell, pressed the case for creating air armadas capable of overflying the "trenches" and striking decisive blows at the heart of an opponent's homeland. Prior to, and during the early stages of World War II it became apparent that Germany had absorbed the concept better than had her enemies. However, in the later stages of that war, centrally controlled and massed US and British airpower played a major role in crushing both Germany and Japan.<sup>99/</sup>

<u>REPORTING TO THE JCS</u>		
<u>FACTORS</u>	<u>FOR</u>	<u>AGAINST</u>
<u>POLITICAL</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● CUBAN MISSILE CRISIS PRECEDENT.</li> <li>● VEHICLE FOR POSSIBLE SEATO PARTICIPATION.</li> <li>● CLOSER REGIONAL COORDINATION OF US POLICIES.</li> <li>● REMOVAL OF CINCPAC AS 'OBSTACLE AND IRRITANT.'</li> <li>● COULD HAVE PRODUCED PRESSURE FOR BETTER INTERAGENCY COORDINATING IN USG.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● SENSITIVITY OF THAIS, LAOTIANS &amp; CAMBODIANS.</li> <li>● PROBABLE WORLDWIDE IMPACT.</li> <li>● "WE SEEK NO WIDER WAR."</li> <li>● REDUCTION OF US AMBASSADORS' INFLUENCE AND COUNTRY TEAM CONCEPT.</li> <li>● SINGLE, POWERFUL "WAR LORD."</li> </ul>
<u>MILITARY</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● UNITY OF EFFORT (FLEXIBILITY, MASS, ETC.).</li> <li>● DOCTRINALLY SOUND.</li> <li>● COMMUNICATIONS/DATA CAPABILITIES.</li> <li>● BETTER COORDINATION OF US INTELLIGENCE AGENCIES.</li> <li>● US/SEATO CONTINGENCY PLANS.</li> <li>● BETTER CONTROL OF US AIRPOWER MORE ECONOMICAL.</li> <li>● ESSENTIAL FIRST STEP FOR POSSIBLE COMBINED COMMAND.</li> <li>● COULD HAVE REDUCED INTERFERENCE BY PACOM COMPONENTS COMMANDS.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● SPAN OF CONTROL OF SEACOM.</li> <li>● POSSIBLE THREATS IN OTHER PACOM AREAS.</li> <li>● RESTRICTION ON SHIFTING FORCES WITHIN PACOM.</li> <li>● PROBABLE CLOSER WASHINGTON CONTROL OF GROUND OPERATIONS.</li> <li>● CINCPAC USUALLY SUPPORTED MACV VIEWS WITH JCS.</li> <li>● POSSIBLE DIMINUTION OF PACOM SUPPORT OF SEACOM (LOGISTICS, ETC.).</li> </ul>
<u>VERDICT</u>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● FRAGMENTED US COMMAND STRUCTURE INEFFICIENT AND COSTLY.</li> <li>● PRESSURE TO CREATE A SEACOM WOULD HAVE PRECIPITATED INTER-SERVICE, INTERAGENCY, AND INTERNATIONAL "BATTLES."</li> <li>● POLITICAL AND COMMUNICATIONS REALITIES COULD HAVE FORCED CINCPAC TO THE SIDELINES.</li> <li>● A SEACOM WOULD NOT HAVE CHANGED, MATERIALLY, THE COURSE OF THE WAR.</li> </ul>		

Figure 11-8. Summary of the Case For and Against a Unified SEACOM

"Lessons" derived from that experience led to the creation of a separate US Air Force and of a basic doctrine and organizational concept for fighting joint and coalition wars. The Korean War, however, found General MacArthur in the position of trying to control three US air forces (USAF, USN, and USMC); only after a protracted interservice struggle was he able to place Korean-based Marine aircraft under the operational control of the 5th US Air Force.<sup>100/</sup> The USN was able to retain its semi-independent "supporting" role.

The limited use of helicopters in Korea excited imaginations and refueled service rivalries. Although the USMC was a pioneer in using large numbers of helicopters in an assault role, it was the Army which picked up the torch and took off with the concept - via the Howze Board. Control of the airspace, to include air defense, became a contentious and continuing issue among the now four US "air forces." From time to time its rough edges have been smoothed, but it has not yet been fully resolved.

## 2. Service Positions (Simplified Summary)

The following Service positions do not purport to be official positions; rather they represent a synthesis of opinions and value judgments professed by flag and field grade officers of all Services during discussions with study analysts. As such, the positions may reflect more honestly what those positions are than would the more sterile official views.<sup>101/</sup>

### a. Army

The primary value of airpower is to assist in winning the land battle; this includes such missions as close support, LOC interdiction, air defense, rescue, aerial resupply, etc. The needs for aerial supremacy and strategic bombing are recognized, but not as overwhelming priorities. Aircraft provide the unified or the ground commander with a unique, flexible and increasingly accurate "faucet of firepower." Air superiority and support is an essential prerequisite but should not be expected to win the war alone; only ground forces can seize and hold the terrain and its resources. Therefore, helicopters and light aircraft (for

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transportation, fire support, command and control, resupply, medical evacuation and rescue.) must be responsive to the local commander and thus in his "hip pocket." Even so there is constant pressure for centralization (MACV "Stovepipe") and another for decentralization. In 1966, the Army Chief of Staff gave up the light transport (Caribou) to the Air Force in order to retain control over the helicopters. All other available aircraft should be under centralized control of the theater commander (who naturally should be an Army officer); he, in turn, would normally delegate the day-to-day control to his Air Deputy and/or Air Component Commander.

### b. Navy

Early in World War II the aircraft carrier replaced the battleship as the capital ship, and thus as the centerpiece of the surface fleet. A fleet-in-being (afloat, not sunk) is absolutely essential for a maritime nation. That imperative drives a fleet (or Task Force) commander to place top priority on the protection of his capital ships. All of his assets, must be employed to detect and defeat a threat to his force from under, on, or over the seas. He cannot afford to lose control of any of his weaponry and especially of his airpower. The Navy will defend its "support" role and oppose "operational control" by another service or headquarters.

### c. Marines

The inseparable air-ground team was tested, matured and became dogma during the Pacific island-hopping campaigns of World War II. The Marines are light on supporting artillery, etc. and so depend on the Navy and their own air to support them ashore. They became convinced of the worth and essentiality of their air-ground team concept at Guadalcanal when the Japanese periodically forced the USN - especially the few precious carriers - to withdraw in order to survive. Any threat to that concept is viewed as a longer range and more deadly threat to the Corps itself. Therefore, they have resisted fiercely all attempts to divide their air-ground teams. The Korean War "precedent" when the 1st Marine Aircraft Wing came under the operational control of 5th Air Force was - and still is - viewed as an ill omen.

d. Air Force

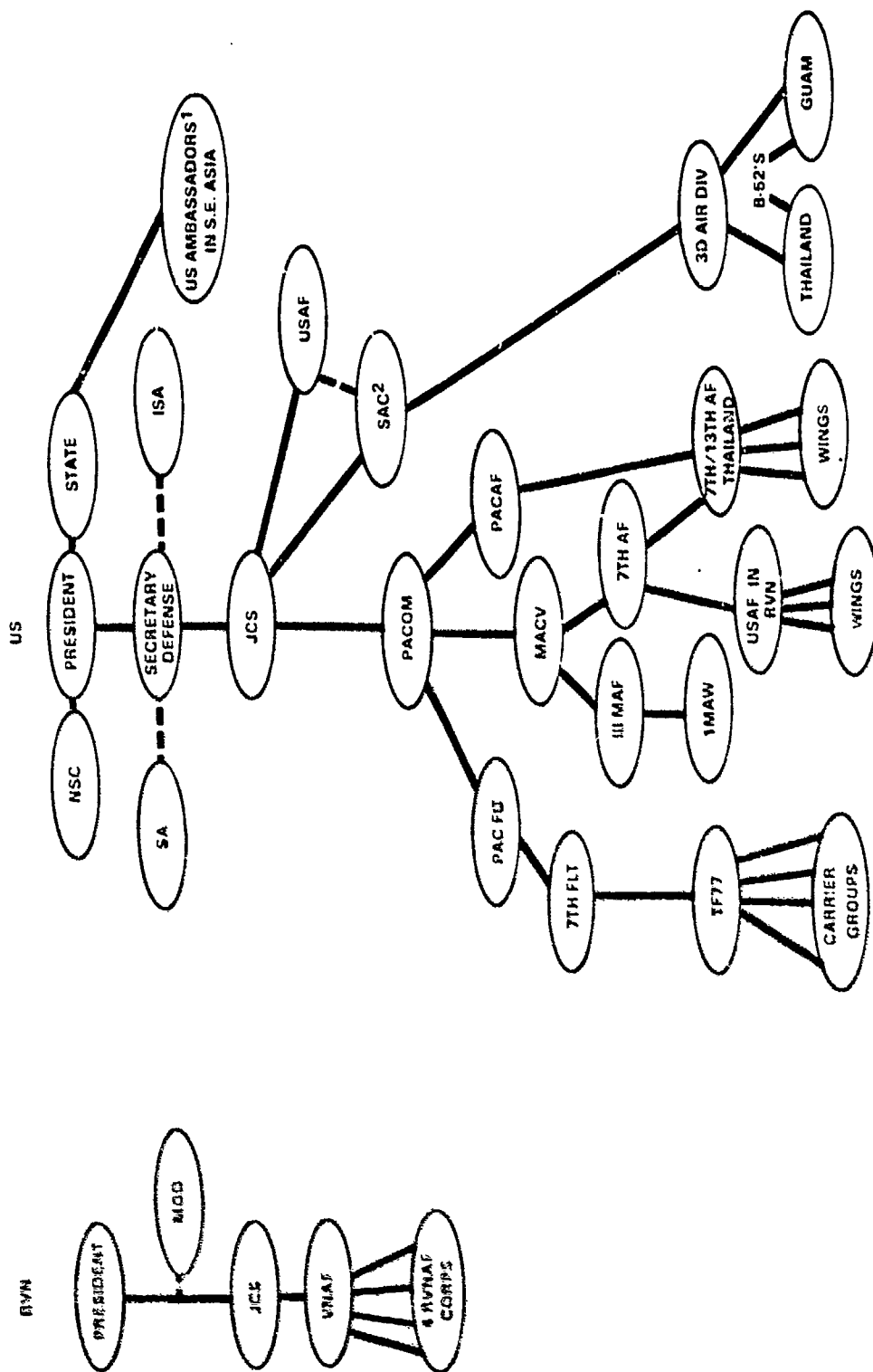
The newest, and in some ways the most forward thinking of the services, considers air power as the decisive arm and the ever-building wave of the future. That view was reinforced during the era of Eisenhower's "massive retaliation" strategy; at least for those elite in the Strategic Air Command (SAC) who had top priority for funds and people, while Tactical Air Command (TAC) and the other commands had lower priorities. Because of the nature of their aircraft and missions, the fighter-bomber and airlift crews have greater empathy with the ground forces than do the missile men and big bomber crews; attempts were made during the Second Indochina War, however, to make the latter an integral and important part of the air-ground team. As a rule, USAF airmen believe strongly in centralized control of airpower and airspace with the USAF normally in charge. It is an article of faith among them that if a centrally planned and controlled Linebacker II - or its equivalent - had been executed earlier, the outcome of the Second Indochina War would have been quite different.

3. Controlling the Air War(s)

For most of the war the control of airpower was fragmented badly (See Figure 11-9). Ultimate control of the US air war, especially over North Vietnam, remained with the president. In the opinion of most professional military officers, President Johnson exercised too tight and yet overly timid control for fear of unduly provoking the PRC and USSR.<sup>102/</sup> (The influence of the JCS will be examined in the following section.)

SAC (a specified command under the JCS), with headquarters at Omaha, retained command of the B-52's on Guam and in Thailand. SAC leaders considered that arrangement necessary to ensure that their primary deterrent/war fighting role was not unduly degraded.

CINCPAC controlled most of the air war in North Vietnam and Laos through his component commanders; CINCPACFLT exercised control of TF77 through 7th Fleet, while PACAF controlled USAF forces through 7th Air Force (earlier 2d Air Division).



NOTES

1 US AMBASSADORS IN RVN, THAILAND, LAOS AND COMBODIA (OFF AND ON). AS PERSONAL REPRESENTATIVES OF THE PRESIDENT, WERE INVOLVED, IN VARYING DEGREES, IN THE AIRWAR

2 SAC IS A SPECIFIED COMMAND

SOURCE: BDM Research and Analysis

11-53

Figure 11-9. Air War in Southeast Asia

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The US ambassadors to Laos, Thailand, and to a lesser extent Cambodia, exercised a considerable degree of power as to which targets would or would not be struck in Laos and Cambodia and from where. General Westmoreland, only half in jest, labeled Ambassadors Sullivan and Martin as "Field Marshals."103/

The Commander of the US 7th Air Force also worked for COMUSMACV for the "in country" war, which eventually included the "extensions of the ground battle" in the southern portion of the DRV and along the Ho Chi Minh Trail network. When Navy aircraft were scheduled to provide close air support or were diverted for that purpose, they usually executed their missions under the control of Air Force or mission forward air controllers, but the Navy did not relinquish operational control of its aircraft.104/

The commander of III MAF retained control of his aircraft including helicopters through his 1st Marine Aircraft Wing (1st MAW). When they were employed out of his area, they came under control of either TF77 or 7th Air Force. This exclusive arrangement was jealously guarded until the "Single Manager for Air" issue was finally decided in early 1968.105/

The US Army successfully resisted several USAF attempts to gain close control over all airspace and aircraft in RVN; the exigencies of the ground battles (often short, sharp, unexpected and at close range) would not permit rigid outside controls of organic or supporting Army aircraft. Routine flights from major airbases, such as Bien Hoa, did require flight plans and clearance through the local Air Traffic Control (ATC) Centers. By 1968 the US Army had about 6,000 aircraft (two-thirds of them helicopters) in RVN.106/ In the main, however, Army helicopters operated virtually without formal control procedures within the Areas of Operation (AOs) of the parent division. In this sense they were not subject to the Tactical Air Control System (TACS) of 7th Air Force.

VNAF, which included all of RVN's military helicopters, was under the control of the JGS. The bulk of the aircraft, however, were geographically dispersed and under the operational control of the four ARVN corps commanders. Control of all flying assets by VNAF commanders assisted in the planning and coordination of air-ground operations at the higher



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levels, but too often resulted in a lack of responsiveness to and empathy with the local ground commanders; many pilots tended to develop a "hard base" mentality. US helicopters often had to conduct emergency medical evacuation and fire support missions for ARVN units during bad weather or under heavy enemy fire.107/

#### 4. Attempts to Centralize Control

During the early days of MACV, the USAF attempted to have an Air Force lieutenant general appointed as Deputy COMUSMACV. General Harkins insisted that the conflict was primarily a ground one and held out for an Army Deputy; he was backed by the JCS and the Secretary Defense. In June 1965 a MACV Deputy for Air was appointed as the "second hat" of the Commander of the 2d US Air Division (later 7th Air Force); General Westmoreland had requested such a decision a year earlier. That deputy, however, had no staff at MACV and precious little authority.108/

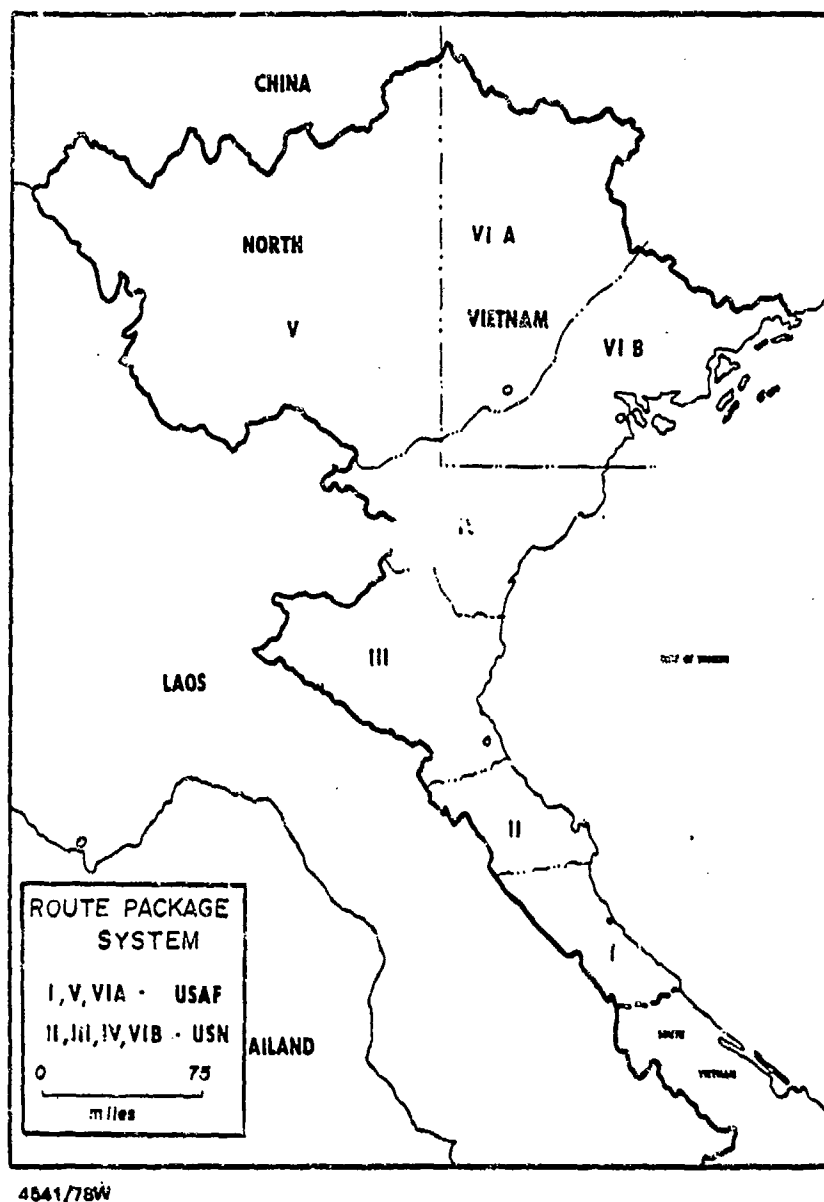
The USAF advanced several proposals to bring all US airpower in the theater(s) under centralized control. Until early 1968 those suggestions were opposed by COMUSMACV, CINCPAC, and the majority of the JCS.109/

Spatial control of the air war over the DRV was exercised through the rather inflexible and inefficient Route Package System with the USN responsible for the northeastern areas and the USAF those in the west and south; this was similar to the compromise system used in the Korean War. (See Figure 11-10)

In order to provide better synchronization of the US airpower available, TF77 and 3d Air Division (SAC) had coordinating groups in Saigon. This method helped smooth out, but did not resolve, the command and intelligence problems.

Strategic bombers provided COMUSMACV with a highly mobile reserve of "heavy aerial artillery." General Westmoreland wrote: "The B-52's were so valuable that I personally dealt with requests from field commanders, reviewed the targets, and normally allocated the available bomber resources on a daily basis."110/

In 1967 the enemy concentrated large forces and heavy firepower in and near the DMZ, which threatened the string of newly-created firebases



SOURCE: Gen W. Momyer, Air Power in Three Wars, p. 99

Figure 11-10. Route Package System

in the area, such as Khe Sanh, Con Thien and Gia Linh. General Monyer, then the commander of the 7th Air Force, was given temporary operational control of a large number of Navy and Marine aircraft to assist the Air Force to smother the enemy with air-delivered firepower. An airborne command control and communications plane (ABCCC) was used to help orchestrate the various strikes. Concentrated intelligence efforts provided a good focus for the location and timing of massive air and artillery fires; that all-out effort was codenamed Operation Neutralize. After that threat diminished, command and control of the air was again fragmented.<sup>111/</sup>

Interservice cooperation on the battlefield was usually quite harmonious and effective. The ground battalion (or brigade) commander was normally aloft in a command and control helicopter and in close contact with the airborne Forward Air Controller (FAC). Together they synchronized the fixed-wing air strikes, the army gunship attacks, the artillery fires and the ground maneuver. Often it was possible to have all four going on concurrently in a relatively small area. Many of the experienced FAC's became so adept at this that the ground commanders had no qualms about temporarily turning over control of all firepower assets to the FAC while the former flew back to refuel or landed to supervise the fight on the spot. Conversely, Army aerial observers (AOs) sometimes controlled USAF close support attacks.<sup>112/</sup>

##### 5. The Price of Fragmentation

As discussed previously, the enemy treated Indochina as a single theater of war, while the USG felt itself to be politically constrained from adopting that militarily sound approach. The air war, in particular, was divided and subdivided; depending on how one counts, there were seven or more "air forces" involved in a relatively small arena. Those arrangements precluded a truly unified strategy.

The number of controlling headquarters ensured that the war would be fought in a piecemeal manner with attendant degradation of unity, surprise mass, flexibility, etc; TF77 usually attacked from the east and 7th Air Force from the south and west. This dispersion of effort also applied to the various intelligence data and analyses. Neither COMUSMACV nor

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CINCPAC could see or report to the JCS the total picture; in fact, they were competitors for attention and resources.113/

The tactical air war was almost as fragmented as was the strategic. At times there appeared to be too much air power in RVN, which resulted in waste. Because planes were available, they were loaded with ordnance and flown. Because it was dangerous to land with tons of explosives, the ordnance had to be dropped; reluctant ground commanders were often "forced" to accept airstrikes which they neither needed nor wanted. Before early 1968 the III MAF often had more aircraft available than was normally required by its two Marine divisions, but at the same time the Americal and 1st Cavalry Divisions, under operational control of the III MAF, were allocated insufficient air support. Although the Marines had been "ashore" for three years, the old air-ground team "beachhead" habits were hard to break.114/

Because they were more readily available and responsive to the ground commander, Army gunships often were overused and misused. The ground forces, to include those of RVNAF, became quite fond of them and at critical times occasionally employed them in lieu of tactical air or even artillery. This unsound predilection was highlighted in Laos in 1971 (Lamson 719) when helicopters reportedly were employed against well-defended hard targets such as tanks. The cost in aircraft and crews was high.115/ (See Table 11-1 for Command and Control of Helicopters)

Without question, the dispersion of the available air power resulted in wasted money, materiel and political-military impact. It would be difficult to prove conclusively, but it is likely that the loosely coordinated fragmentation and operational rigidity (route packages, etc) resulted in unnecessary losses in aircraft and crews.

### 6. The Showdown

The Tet offensive in early 1968, compounding the concerns over the "siege" of Khe Sahn, produced extreme anxiety in the top levels of USG. That "air of impending doom" was transmitted, daily or more often, to the JCS and thence from General Wheeler to Admiral Sharp and General Westmoreland. Even experienced, intelligent and cool soldiers like Maxwell Taylor

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TABLE II-1. COMMAND AND CONTROL OF HELICOPTERS

Service	Operational Control	Tasking: Means of control TACPs with ALO and FAC at Bde and higher level provided some direction or control.	Remarks
US Army	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Organic division helicopters</li> <li>Supported ground unit commander for 1st Avn Bde (non-organic) helos.</li> </ul>	Parent division: Operate in division AO, radio contact with unit supported and flight following by parent unit.  Field Force to which group was assigned based on request from supported unit: operate in designated AO contacting unit supported and flight *following by parent unit.	Use 7th AF CRP radar vector in bad weather.  - same -
USMC	1st MAW	Fragged by 1st MAW TADC and DASCs in each TAOR (Mini-DASC, airborne C-130 DASC or HDC used on occasion): Control by Marine TACS. III MAF had one CRP and several ASRTS.	USMC helicopters organic to MAW. Divisions have no helicopters. DASCs collocated with F3CCs.
USAF	7th/13th AF	7th/13th AF: AF TACC (TACS)	7th AF - RVN 13th AF - Thailand
USN	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>TF77</li> <li>Sea Wolf (HA(L)-3)</li> </ul>	TF77 TACC: TF77 TACS  TF116 (River Patrol Force): Cognizant NOC (CIC).	Report to cognizant TACS element on entering RVN air space.  In direct support of TF116.
VNAF	ARVN Corps Cdr.	ARVN Corps Cdr.: Joint USAF/VNAF DASC at ARVN CTOC.	VNAF helo units assigned to ARVN CTZs.
FWMAF	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1st Austr. TF (RAAF UH-1 Sqn)</li> <li>1st Avn Bde (RAN Flt)</li> <li>ROKA Div.</li> </ul>	1st ATF: RAAF TACP.  II FFV: Operate in designated AO, contact with supported unit.  Div CG: USAF TACP.	UH-1 Sqn in direct support.  Assigned to US/RAN Avn Co under 1st AVN Bde.  USAF TACPs with ROK Army divisions, III MAF TACPs with ROK MC Bde.
ALO	Air Liaison Office		
AO	Area of Operations		
AOC	Air Operations Center		
ASRT	Air Support Radar Team (IISMC)		
CIC	Combat Information Center (Navy)		
CRP	Control and Reporting Post		
DASC	Direct Air Support Center		
FAC	Forward Air Controller		
FRAG	Daily Air Operations (Fragmentary Order)		
HDC	Helicopter Direction Center (USMC)		
MAW	Marine Aircraft Wing		
NOC	Navy Operations Center CIC		
RAAF	Royal Australian Air Force		
RAN	Royal Australian Navy		
TACC	Tactical Air Command Center		
TACP	Tactical Air Control Party		
TACS	Tactical Air Control System		
TADC	Tactical Air Direction Center (USMC)		
TAOR	Tactical Area of Responsibility		
*Flight following is a service performed by a radar installation for an aircraft on request. It is usually used under instrument flying conditions to advise the pilot of any air traffic that might be a hazard.			

SOURCES: Momyer, Airpower in Three Wars; McCutcheon, "Marine Aviation in Vietnam"; Eckhardt, Command and Control; discussions with former helicopter unit commanders; 7th Air Force Publication 55-1; Seventh Air Force In Country Tactical Air Operations Handbook; Swarztrauber, "River Patrol Relearned"

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became very concerned about the apparent similarities between Khe Sanh and Dien Bien Phu. In an unprecedented move, the President required the JCS to sign "in blood" as some put it, a memorandum that Khe Sanh could and would be held.116/

The differences between the situation at Khe Sanh and the one at Dien Bien Phu 14 years earlier were more significant than were the similarities. Among the major asymmetries were the relative distances and the balance of power at play; US firepower, especially air delivered, was overwhelming. Poor weather in the area complicated the problem, but was not a major obstacle except perhaps to a ground link-up with the "fortress." Concentrated and continuous firepower was the "blue chip" which permitted Generals Momyer and Westmoreland to assure the Joint Chiefs that their pledge was justified. Yet the Marines and, to a lesser extent, the Navy stoutly resisted - in Saigon, Hawaii, and Washington - single managership (especially by an Air Force general) of the air battle. But by then General Westmoreland had more than his fill of interservice squabbles and delays. He did not intend to lose that battle, either on the ground or in the bureaucracy, and considered resigning if overruled.117/

General Momyer summed up the situation and the solution:

The problem of air controlling became acute. The Marines had maintained that this was a Marine air-ground team operation and that all air used for close air support should come under their control. Furthermore, a circle had been drawn around Khe Sanh, and it was proposed to prohibit all but Marine air strikes within that circle. A reduced DASC called a "mini DASC" was established within the command post of the 26th Regiment, and the mini DASC was linked to the DASC with the 3rd Marine Division at Dong Ha. Communications were then established with the Marine TACC at Danang. With the magnitude of air traffic around Khe Sanh, the system was totally inadequate.

Because of these problems I told Westmoreland that centralized control of the air had become absolutely essential. Without it, Khe Sanh could well be lost. Our discussion led Westmoreland to designate me as the

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Deputy Commander for Air Operations, MACV, the single manager for all fixed wing aircraft in the theater.

On 18 January 1968, Westmoreland sent a message to Sharp which read as follows:

The changing situation places a demand for greater organization and control of air resources and a premium on the need for rapid decision-making. It is no longer feasible nor prudent to restrict the employment of the total tactical air resources to given areas. I feel the utmost need for a more flexible posture to shift my air effort where it can best be used in the coming battles. Consequently, I am proposing to give my Air Deputy operational control of the 1st Marine Air Wing, less the helicopters.118/

According to General Momyer, Sharp concurred after being briefed by Major General Gordon F. Blood, Deputy for Operations of 7th Air Force, and discussing the matter with Wheeler.119/ Admiral Sharp had previously resisted such an arrangement but he, too, felt the pressure from Washington and recognized the need for an all out unified air effort. His reversal shocked the Navy and Marines and they - as he put it - "went to General Quarters."120/

Not for the first time the JCS came up with a "waffled" compromise, but General Westmoreland acted on CINCPAC's decision. Not unexpectedly, once the firm decision was made both the Navy and the Marines cooperated well with General Momyer.121/

Putting aside the debate over the political-military value of Khe Sanh, the end results demonstrated the awesome potential of centrally and sensibly directed air power of all dimensions - recce, strike, heavy bomber, resupply, etc. Khe Sanh was never seriously assaulted and the PAVN suffered extremely disproportionate losses. "The Single Manager for Air" finally won his point. Ironically, however, no real political advantage was gained from that "victory" as the shock of Tet had turned key "hawks" into at least "dawks" or "doves"; the public and governmental limit of patience and endurance had been reached.

7. A Step Forwards and Backwards

If Khe Sanh provided a model for the tactical application of airpower, Linebacker II (the Christmas blitz of '72) provided an example of the use of strategic bombing to gain political ends, and in that sense it was a giant step forward.

Yet, for command and control it was a definite retrogression. Because of the high political impact and the penchant for secrecy, the planning was done mainly in the US. Using a rationale similar to that used by Navy carrier admirals, CINCSAC with USAF support refused to relinquish operational control of the B-52 bombers to either COMUSMACV or CINCPAC.<sup>122/</sup> The JCS selected the targets and got them blessed by the president. SAC headquarters at Omaha laid out the precise routes, altitudes, and tactics to be employed by the trump cards - the "buffs" or B-52's. In Saigon, the so-called "Single Manager for Air" (who by that time was also The Deputy COMUSMACV) was not a party to SAC planning and had to play his extremely important and difficult supporting role on a crash basis, daily. There was a see-saw battle between CINCPAC and CINCSAC as to whom was actually in charge of the air war over the DRV. The rigid and predictably repetitive tactics employed by SAC resulted in what some critics considered to have been undue casualties causing extreme bitterness and frustration (near mutiny) among some of the B-52 crews, especially among those based in Thailand who flew more missions against the heaviest defenses. Eventually, realistic counters were taken by SAC planners and the DRV quickly sent their representative back to Paris.<sup>123/</sup>

8. In Retrospect

The speed, range and firepower of today's fixed-wing tactical and strategic aircraft can be employed to their maximum effectiveness only if they are under the centralized control of the theater commander.

Interservice rivalries, parochialism, and doctrinal disputes played a not insignificant role in preventing the expensive and overpowering US air power from being employed to its maximum advantage for most of the war. (That fact stands out in spite of the many constraints placed on its use by the USG.)



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The single manager for air issue might have been resolved more easily and quickly if the USG had established a theater-wide Southeast Asia command directly under the JCS; a true combined command under US control also could have facilitated centralized control of air power.

The Second Indochina War did not resolve that command issue; the interservice debate continues as to how to fight and command the "next war" in Korea or elsewhere. (Encouraging, if slow, progress is being made, however, in attempting to integrate better the attack helicopter and the A-10 close support aircraft through the medium of Joint Army-Air Force field tests.)124/

### G. COMMUNICATIONS

No analysis of command and control would be complete without an examination of the communications which provided the means for commanders to exercise control. This section is not a technical evaluation, but rather a broad overview from the senior commanders' and staff's point of view.

#### 1. Young RVNAF

When the MAAG assumed responsibilities for all aspects of upgrading RVNAF, they found that, "in practice the system was beset by conflicting, duplicating channels of command and communications. . .".125/ There was also a wide mixture of French and US communications equipment, much of it inoperable and without spare parts or adequate maintenance support. Thereafter tactical communications for the regular forces improved steadily. The territorial forces (e.g., CG and SDC), however, were especially deficient in communications equipment and training; this deficiency took much longer to solve, and many outposts and patrols were overrun in the interim:

- The introduction of US-manned helicopters and tactical aircraft to support RVNAF in early 1962 created a new set of communications, language, tactical and control problems. For the most part they were resolved on the ground by the US advisors, a fact which gave them additional prestige and leverage with their counterparts.126/

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- The rapidly expanding US advisory effort required the establishment of special US communications nets for unit and territorial advisors. These nets served not only as the means to coordinate US actions but also those of GVN/RVNAF.127/

### 2. The US Build Up

The rapid build up of US forces (1965-1966) demanded ad hoc solutions across the military spectrum to include the communications field; naturally there was much waste, duplication, and gaps in tactical, administrative, and strategic networks. Generals Westmoreland and Starbird (Director of the Defense Communication Agency) received JCS approval in April '65 to consolidate communications-electronics functions at the MACV level. This move and the later organization of the 1st Signal Brigade gradually established a degree of order and efficiency into the system.128/ By the end of the US buildup, this brigade was comprised of about 20,000 soldiers.

When General Harold K. Johnson, Chief of Staff US Army, visited Vietnam in December of that year, however, progress was not apparent to him. He noted that:

Communications are supersaturated and the condition will be exacerbated rather than ameliorated or alleviated in the months ahead unless a massive, concerted effort is committed to improvement in the months immediately ahead.129/

Admiral Sharp, as CINCPAC, was concerned not only with the vastly expanded communications needs for the conflict in Vietnam, but also with linking them with the remainder of his Pacific Theater:

The result was the establishment of an integrated communications system in support of Southeast Asia operations extending from Hawaii to Korea in the north, to Vietnam and Thailand in the south, and along the island chain from the Philippines to Japan."130/

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### 3. Crisis Management and Fighting Wars

The US spent considerable effort and money on its World Wide Military Command and Control System (WWMCCS). Highly technical equipment permitted the National Command Authority (NCA: the President or his surrogate) to communicate worldwide almost instantaneously. A Secretary of Defense talked with a destroyer captain during the Cuban missile crisis. The Secretary of State attempted to mastermind the belated emergency evacuation of Saigon on April 1975 from Washington, "a dangerous game".<sup>131/</sup> The President personally issued orders to a single fighter-bomber pilot during the Mayaguez incident, but the local commander could not! That capability plus the ever-present fear of World War III militate in favor of the NCA maintaining tight personal control over sensitive operations.<sup>132/</sup>

During the Tet offensive of 1968 and the "siege" of Khe Sanh, General Wheeler was under constant pressure from President Johnson and Secretary McNamara--the Chairman was on the phone with General Westmoreland once or more a day for several critical weeks.<sup>133/</sup> This sort of "inter-continental hand-holding" tends to distract a local commander.

Up-to-date, first-hand, knowledge enhanced the power and status of many staff officers in Washington, Honolulu, and Saigon. The ubiquitous availability of overseas telecommunications was exploited fully (See Figure 11-11) by military and civilian staff members, both high and low level. Often this short cut to formal staffing procedures was necessary, but many calls were also made for frivolous, selfish, or lazy reasons. This informal staffing system often saves valuable time, but if exercised incorrectly undercuts or even subverts the formal chain of command. It also floods the communication system, and, despite "priorities," can result in the pigeon-holing of critical operational messages, as reportedly happened during the evacuation of Saigon.

In his monograph on Communications-Electronics in Vietnam, MG Thomas M. Rienzi concluded that one of the major factors in gaining centralized control over the earlier fragmented communications efforts was the "marriage" between the highly skilled people of the Army's Strategic Communications Command and the more mobile and flexible theater signal troop.<sup>135/</sup>

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	<u>1964</u>	<u>1967</u>
● Message Traffic		
Hq CINCPAC (per month)	29,000	60,000
Theater Wide (yearly)	12 million	18 million
● Circuits in Def. Commo System	3,500	13,900
● Radio Frequencies Theater wide	12,000	21,000
NOTE:	In mid 1969 PACOM was into its third expansion of the basic communications plan but had yet to catch up with the "Snowballing" requirements.	

SOURCE: BDM Research and Analysis

Figure 11-11. Increased Demands on the PACOM Communications System During the US Buildup in Vietnam

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Admiral Sharp in his 1968 report on the war drew attention to the tremendous increase in the theater-wide demands on the communication systems by citing several illustrative and impressive statistics.136/

### 4. The Enemy Listens In

US soldiers (officers and enlisted alike) during the past several wars, were notorious for their poor communications security, especially on telephones and tactical radios; those of RVNAF were as bad or worse, having "learned" from both the Americans and the French. Impatience, confidence in their own mobility and firepower, misunderstanding of the enemy's methods and capabilities, the imperatives of close combat, inexperienced leaders or the lack of sufficiently and skilled morse code (radio teletype) operators and repairmen, easily broken unit codes, etc, added up to handing the enemy, on an "electronic platter," invaluable and timely intelligence. This carelessness was costly and a major concern to commanders and the MACVJ2.137/ Command emphasis, new SOP's retraining, scrambler telephones, and voice-secure tactical radios, helped ameliorate, but never really solved this problem. Too many people still talked too much and too freely.138/

The enemy, by contrast, exercised much tighter discipline on his communications; the first voice intercept of their transmissions in the highlands was not made until 1967!139/ Sometimes, however, enemy commanders would panic under pressure and broadcast instructions in the clear; the US 11th Armored Cavalry regiment severely punished the PAVN 95C Regiment for just such a cardinal sin.140/

US voice-secure facilities were available to officers of the RVNAF JGS, but a US officer was required to be present during the transmission. The South Vietnamese, however, generally preferred to use their simpler and more easily compromised Swedish scramblers; this preference was not only a matter of "face," but also of convenience and for the protection of nationally sensitive information.141/

### 5. US Withdrawal

The original US plan to leave a residual force of advisors and support elements in RVN was invalidated by the terms of the January 1973

Cease-Fire. RVNAF, and especially its technical branches, still required extensive training and supervision before they could be considered a fully competent and self sustaining force. Civilian contractors filled part of the gap.

During the US phase down and "Vietnamization" phase, additional contractors were hired to train--in RVN and the US--RVNAF signalmen in the operation and maintenance of complex systems such as the Integrated Communications System (ICS), much of which was left in place for their use.<sup>142/</sup>

6. In Retrospect

Admiral Sharp, in 1968, made this evaluation:

While there has been no positive indication that a lack of long-lines communications has been a limiting factor in the planning or conduct of operations, or in the management of material or personnel, the approved and funded programs are not totally adequate, and efforts to improve Pacific Command communications capabilities should be continued.<sup>143/</sup>

The US continued to place a high priority on communications up to and beyond the ceasefire. Drastic cuts in FY 1974 and 1975 aid appropriations, however, resulted in serious shortages of replacement equipment and spare parts.

General Westmoreland observed that:

As vital to the success of our forces in Vietnam as the building of bases and improving lines of communications, was the establishment of a modern communications system for command and control.<sup>144/</sup>

Gen. Rienza declared that:

The magnitude of Army communications in the war in Vietnam has exceeded the scale of their employment in any previous war in history. These communications have increased in the same proportion as has the extraordinary mobility of troops and of firepower, often delivered from aloft, whether by Army helicopter gunships, Air Force bombers and fighters, or Navy and

Marine jet aircraft. In fact, the mobility and firepower of our Army would themselves have been unmanageable without the hitherto unheard-of mobile and fixed combat communications facilities and the skilled communicators that have evolved in this conflict. 145/

Obviously there is another side of this coin: the cost of communications in Vietnam was high. Communication operations were expensive; many were wasteful. Money bought necessary redundancy, unnecessary duplication, and even luxury. The strategic, tactical, and administrative traffic essential for effective command and control most likely could have been with less equipment and fewer people. Higher headquarters in Hawaii and in Washington required excessively detailed reports from the field, a tendency which is not likely to abate in any further hostilities. Even in country, communications and helicopters provided the opportunity for commanders to intrude themselves into the operations of subordinate units to a degree never before experienced.

#### H. WHO HAD THE HELM IN WASHINGTON?

##### 1. The Focus

Although the general question of who ran the war is covered in some detail in Volumes III and V, there remain several sub-issues which are relevant to the direct control of the military side of the war. The focus will be centered on the role and influence of the JCS during the conflict.

##### 2. The Commander-in-Chief

###### a. Men and White Horses

There have been very few notable challenges to the constitutional authority of the president over the military, and those were not grave ones. During our Civil War, Major General George McClellan often displayed open contempt for President Lincoln and sometimes even disregarded his orders; he was "fired" twice and then failed as a politician. During the Korean War, General MacArthur publicly and passionately disagreed with President Truman's policies; after the US defeat near the Yalu, and on the recommendation of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, MacArthur was

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relieved of his command, and after a brief blaze of glory, he "faded away." As both Washington and Eisenhower demonstrated, one must dismount from his horse before he moves into the White House.

Lawrence Korb wrote, "By their actions, the Joint Chiefs prevented a constitutional crisis and solidified the American traditional civilian control over the military".<sup>146/</sup> Their strong stand also reasserted, at least temporarily, their own position as the chief military advisors to the president.

### b. Vietnam

In a recent interview, General Maxwell Taylor declared that there was no question in anyone's mind in the USG about who made the final decisions on the war: it was President Johnson.<sup>147/</sup> In turn, President Nixon also reserved the major decisions to himself.<sup>148/</sup> From the moment he took office, President Ford was severely constrained by the fallout from Watergate, increasing congressional truculence, and a nationwide desire to put Vietnam behind us; he did receive more public praise than blame, however, for his use of force in the Mayaguez incident. (In retrospect, however, the Mayaguez planning was inhibited by inadequate local intelligence, the execution was faulty and costly in lives, and the operation probably was unnecessary to force release of the prisoners).

Each Commander-in-Chief has his own "system" for asking for, receiving, and evaluating military advice from the Joint Chiefs. Unfairly or not, however, the military leaders felt unduly blamed for the Bay of Pigs fiasco, and were held under tight reins during the Cuban Missile Crisis. Those precedents had an influence on President Johnson's decision personally to control much of the air war over the DRV.<sup>149/</sup>

It is generally argued, however, that until Tet/Khe Sanh 1968, the ground war in the RVN was left to the military. Leslie Gelb, who had chaired the "Pentagon Papers" project, later wrote:

Finally, despite tight monitoring of the air war, Johnson sought to mitigate inevitable military discomfort with a limited war by not interfering in how they ran the war in South Vietnam.<sup>150/</sup>



c. Post Vietnam

President Carter must have entered office with serious reservations about the soundness of our National Military Command and Control organization and process. Early in his administration, he asked for a study to examine the structure in depth. Richard C. Steadman was tasked to head the study effort. In the Introduction of his report, he summarized his task and general findings:

In September 1977, President Carter requested that the Secretary of Defense initiate a searching organizational review of the National Military Command Structure (NMCS). He requested an unconstrained examination of alternatives for making it more effective and efficient in carrying out the national security mission. This Report presents and evaluates alternatives responsive to the President's instructions.

What emerged from the discussions and studies was a consensus that, by and large, the system has been generally adequate to meet our national security needs in peacetime, crisis, and wartime. We did find, however, a general perception of some fundamental shortcomings which may make it incapable of dealing adequately with our future needs.<sup>151/</sup>

In his report he gave both good and bad marks to the Joint Chiefs, their staff, and the staffing system; on balance he concluded that the system should and could be improved. Additional references will be made to that report throughout this section.

3. The Joint Chiefs: Generals and Admirals

a. A Little History

Hastily established during World War II to provide President Roosevelt with a counterpart to Churchill's Chiefs of Staff Committee, the US Joint Chiefs of Staff did not achieve legal status until five years later. The National Security Act of 1947 established the Department of Defense, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and a separate US Air Force.<sup>152/</sup> It was not until 1979 that the Commandant of the Marine Corps (CMC) was made a full fledged member of the Joint Chiefs, although the CMC had been a defacto member almost from the beginning. Over the years, amendments to

that National Security Act and various reorganizations have formalized and strengthened the role of the Chairman. (CJCS).153/

It is doubtful if many civilians know that the Joint Chiefs are not in the legal military chain of command. The legal line of authority goes from the Commander-in-Chief through the Secretary of Defense (or his Deputy) to the unified and specified commanders. But, "as a matter of policy, the Secretary generally exercises his command authority through the Joint Chiefs of Staff. . ." 154/

How did they exercise that delegated authority during the Vietnam War? A separate detailed study would be required to answer that question fully and fairly. Even so, the issue at least must be addressed when evaluating command and control during the war. In order to meet the purpose of this section of the study, observations of those who were in a position to evaluate their performance during the war are presented:

b. Grading the Joint Chiefs

1) Passing Marks

Admiral Sharp:

During that period the Joint Chiefs and the Chairman did their best to advise the President on the courses of action which should have, in their opinion, made it possible to attain the objectives we were pursuing when we entered the war. The fact that their advice was not accepted was most unfortunate, but the system worked. When the Joint Chiefs find themselves in the position of having their recommendations consistently ignored or rebuffed, their responsibility under that system is to continue to search for new, potentially acceptable courses of action, as well as to reassess and reaffirm previous but still valid proposals. The Joint Chiefs of Staff did this repeatedly throughout the Vietnam War, but their recommendations were usually turned down by the President. Under our system, however, the President is the Commander-in-Chief--he makes the final decisions, has the ultimate responsibility, and that is the way it should be. 155/

(But also see section 2).)

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General Westmoreland: Besides giving the Chiefs credit for their loyal support to the field commanders, he endorses their view of the war.

The strategy of gradually escalating pressure was a new concept; the Joint Chiefs of Staff disagreed with it. It was not, to them, an early "win" policy. Most military men are accustomed to thinking in terms of terminating a war in the shortest practical time and at least cost, following a decision to fight. It is perhaps unnecessary to make the point that there is a relationship between the length of a war and its cost.156/

(But also see section 2).)

Ambassador Robert Komer:

I will go further and say that, to a great extent, American policy makers listened. You can't read the actual operational policy documents in The Pentagon Papers or the cables from Ambassador Lodge without getting the feeling that they call, at various times, for just about everything that the critics say we should have done operationally in Vietnam -- even the JCS papers include a whole series of sensible proposals on the political and economic, as well as on the military, front. But The Pentagon Papers also show starkly the immense contrast between what policy called for and what we actually did.157/

Richard Steadman:

First, and most importantly, however imperfect our command arrangements may have been, few would make the case that the nature of the command system had any appreciably negative effect on the conduct of the war; good people, operating under the pressure of war, made the command structure work despite its shortcomings.158/

(But also see sub paragraph 2).)

George Fielding Elliot:

If, in their opinion, the views of the Joint Chiefs or those of the individual Service Chiefs were not adequately represented they are not known to have

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exercised their legal right to present their views separately and directly to the President. If after having exercised this right, the President had not accepted their advice, they had the further option of resigning in protest. To do so, however would have meant that they had very strong views in opposition to the higher direction of the war. The explanation that they did not protest because they were weak seems neither justifiable nor true. On the other hand, the continued reports of friction within the Department of Defense decision-making structure, indicate that all is not well there. That the first was directed by a civilian Secretary of Defense has turned out so badly points all the more to the need of a thorough re-examination of the requirements for successful US military direction in the future. 159/

George Ball:

The most grievous offense will be the academicians' effort to offload the sins of this melancholy time on the military, who, skilled more with the sword than the pen, cannot adequately defend themselves against egghead francs-tireurs blowing beanshooters from the sanctuary of their ivory towers. 160/

Ambassador U. Alexis Johnson:

In a recent discussion about getting more US troops in Vietnam in 1965, he said that it wasn't the "bloodthirsty Chiefs" who were pushing for them but rather an impatient President Johnson. 161/

### 2) Failing Marks

Admiral Sharp:

The JCS argued throughout against the restrained approach of gradualism in our bombing strategy, insisting that only a most dramatic, forceful and consistent application of air power would accomplish our intended objectives. It was, and is, the Joint Chiefs' legal right to carry that argument directly to the President. Even though they may have been discouraged from doing so during this period, my opinion in retrospect is that perhaps they did not exercise this right to a sufficient extent. 162/

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General Westmoreland, concerning the need of a single manager for Air in S.E. Asia:

In the Joint Chiefs of Staff the Marine Corps Commandant made a doctrinal issue of it. One meeting on the subject followed another. To my disappointment, the Army Chief of Staff, General Johnson, concerned lest a precedent be established that might lead to the Army's losing its helicopters to the Air Force, failed to support my position. Marine Corps pressure on Admiral Sharp at CINCPAC was heavy. It was one of my most exasperating exercises. . . . the Joint Chiefs in Washington continued to cavil over my decision.163/

Major General George Keegan, USAF:

Why is it impossible in the United States, within the military, first of all, within the Air Force, within the Joint Chiefs, within the National Security Council, to use this very costly, but very effective tool--air power? Why is it impossible to arrive at a proper mix of political control and direction that permits its optimal use for optimal impact as early as possible, at least cost to the economy? I know of no time, save those eleven days, when air power was used properly for limited purposes for results that could achieve a settlement.164/

Brigadier General S.L.A. (Slam) Marshall, AUS

The Joint Chiefs, who did not want the war, had accepted the notion that the main guidance would come from the White House. If they as a body are to be faulted, it is not on the score that they were in any sense warmongering, but that they would not play a strong hand in buffering the Presidential positions. While they did not abdicate, they pulled in their horns, and in that, I would say, they are reprehensible.165/

Henry Kissinger:

The briefings did not offer imaginative ideas to a new President eager for them, even from the military. For years, the military had been complaining about being held on a leash by the civilian leadership. But

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when Nixon pressed them for new strategies, all they could think of was resuming the bombing of the North.166/

Guenter Lewy:

Westmoreland's immediate superior, CINCPAC, and the JCS viewed their role as that of supporting COMUSMACV. The PROVN study of 1966, commissioned by the Army chief of staff, which questioned Westmoreland's strategy and urged that top priority be given to pacification, at the request of MACV was reduced to a "conceptual document." According to The Pentagon Papers, the study for a while was treated with such delicacy that Army officers were forbidden even to discuss its existence outside DOD.167/

President Johnson (per David Halberstam):

The trip of General Harold K. Johnson to Vietnam was important. He was sent specifically by Lyndon Johnson, who had given him a real dressing-down. The President had let loose, right in front of members of the general's staff. All he heard from his generals, President Johnson said, was "Bomb, bomb, bomb. That's all you know. Well, I want to know why there's nothing else. You generals have all been educated at the taxpayers' expense, and you're not giving me any ideas and any solutions for this damn little pissant country. Now, I don't need ten generals to come in here ten times and tell me to bomb. I want some solutions. I want some answers."168/

(But later, when he was in retirement, it was reported that he said, in effect, "I should have listened more to my military advisors.")

Townsend Hoopes, Undersecretary of the Air Force:

McNamara, though he complained privately of the error and waste inherent in search-and-destroy operations, could not get his hands on the levers without explicit presidential support; and the Joint Chiefs of Staff, although some of them were disquieted by the attrition strategy, were unwilling to direct changes. In the particular circumstances, continued JCS deference to Westmoreland seemed an extreme form of professional courtesy, but it was a cold fact that in

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February 1968 the men and the means did not exist in Washington to change our military strategy in Vietnam.169/

General Bruce Palmer:

As I mentioned earlier, the JCS never did have much control over the air war which was closely monitored by our top civilian leaders. Although the air offensive was widely and hotly debated in Washington, there was a curious lack of any real debate with respect to the ground war in SVN until very late in the game and the US was fully committed. Civilian leaders and the JCS in effect gave up the initiative to GEN Westmoreland who became the architect of a strategy of attrition .170/

Major General De Witt Smith:

When asked recently if the JCS played an active and constructive role during the war replied that they probably did not and acted more as a "conduit."171/

Brigadier General Douglas Kinnard:

On the other hand, Westmoreland was satisfied with the Joint Chiefs, and especially of General Wheeler, in their role as the supervising agency of the war in Vietnam. One of the Joint Chiefs during this period told me that he had felt like an "observer" and, despite a sense of responsibility for what was happening, had little feeling of control over the war itself.172/

Lawrence T. Korb:

In his pioneering study of the Joint Chiefs of Staff as individuals and as a corporate body, Korb charges that the chiefs are poor planners, "have consistently allowed themselves to be intimidated by political leaders into supporting policies to which they were or should have been opposed," and that they have tended to react instead of innovate.173/

Alain Enthoven and K. Wayne Smith:

Those gentlemen who played key roles in OSD's office of Systems analysis, faulted the JCS for being poor in data management and analysis, were "rubber stamps" for COMUSMACV and CINCPAC, a "Committee"

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which must be "forced" to make the hard choices between competing and parochial service interests and requests. 174/

### 3) The Report Card

This brief survey of observations and opinions concerning the merits and demerits of the JCS during the Vietnam conflict certainly does not justify awarding a pass or fail mark for their conduct. However, it does raise important questions that should be studied in more depth than was indicated by the Steadman Report.

If the JCS are unable, or unwilling, to play a positive and constructive role as the senior military advisors to the President, the Secretary of Defense, and the Congress, then who should or will? A separate body of senior National Military Advisors, totally separated from the services? A civilian Deputy Secretary of Defense for operations with his own mixed staff?

During a recent interview, General Maxwell Taylor raised the issue of whether or not the chiefs did a proper job of supervising the field forces during the war. He believes that they are the body that should see that field commanders do what they are supposed to do and are given the necessary resources to do it. Yet he noted that the JCS as a body never had the sense of responsibility as does the field commander. For example, they never really analyzed MACV's Annual Campaign Plan. He suggested the need for more study on the subject. 175/

On balance, however, the Chiefs performed a series of very demanding and thankless tasks with too little guidance or support. It appears likely that they understood the nature, extent and consequences of that protracted conflict little better or worse than did other key figures in the USG, including the military. They loyally (perhaps too much so) served some difficult and demanding masters.

Korb concluded that:

Given the constraints placed upon them by their position in the Department of Defense and the American political system, the Joint Chiefs have performed reasonably well. Although their response to the environment generally lags for a time, they usually have



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been flexible enough to make the necessary adjustments before it becomes too late. As we have seen in the preceding pages, the chiefs eventually adapted to the false economies of Louis Johnson, the madness of MacArthur, the strategic absurdities of the Eisenhower administration, the management innovations and high-handedness of McNamara, and the excessive secrecy of the Nixon administration.<sup>176/</sup>

There were, and still are, serious shortcomings in the Joint structure and system. Even during the war the "fights" between and within the Services over roles, missions, and funds continued and often were overly heated and counterproductive. In the future the JCS must do a better and more rational job of allocating and supervising the use of relatively scarce resources. If they don't, someone else will.

The Joint Chiefs work in three dimensions (up, laterally, and down); during the Vietnam conflict they displayed shortcomings in all three. They were unable, for the most part, to explain the realities and necessities of war to their civilian chiefs. After presenting a united front on such issues as bombing, mining, and mobilization, they did not hammer out and "sell" a truly unified strategy and control mechanism for the conflict. Nor did they exercise proper and constructive supervision of the ground war. The charges that they were primarily rubber stamps and conduits are not without foundation.

In today's electronic and nuclear world, the issue of how much autonomy to grant a field commander is a real and pressing one. General (Ret.) Donald Bennett said in 1976 that the US military must learn to conduct tactical operations under strategic limitations, because "the price you pay for war is going to become so great that literally you can't afford to let a tactical commander who has only a limited understanding of the strategic problems make all the decisions."<sup>177/</sup> If more true than not, Gen. Bennett's evaluation calls for serious rethinking and a general consensus within and between the various US agencies responsible for national security.

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The other side of that coin is the issue of how national civilian control of the military should be exercised: what should be the guide lines and parameters and what checks and balances should be exercised by whom? Even an attempt to resolve that two-sided issue will run head on into the "real world" of the Washington politics of decision making: an inevitable turn-over of actors, personalities, pressures, priorities, and crises. The stakes are too high, however, to avoid the effort. No matter how essential, modern communications do not automatically equate with effective command and control. The captain, the helmsmen, and the crew either work in purposeful harmony or the ship is in danger.

### I. SUMMARY ANALYSIS AND INSIGHTS

There is a great deal to learn from analyses of the arrangements employed to plan and control the US and allied war effort in Indochina, but there is little to emulate.

The four main elements of the US strategy for the conflict (i.e., preparing GVN & RVNAF to stand on their own, defeating the enemy's strategy on the ground within RVN, the punitive air war over the DRV, and the quest for meaningful negotiations), for the most part, were separately conceived and controlled and at times largely unrelated.

The enemy (Lao Dong leadership) treated Indochina as one integral theater of war, while the US - to our detriment - artificially divided it (politically, geographically, and militarily) into a number of nearly autonomous fiefdoms.

The United States adopted a system of command and control which it recognized as inherently flawed. The reasons for selecting such a system were many and varied, they included: the sensitivity and vulnerability of the GVN and RVNAF to the charge of being US puppets; the USG's concept of limited war for limited aims; the desire of the White House to keep tight control over the air war in the North; the reluctance of the JCS to infringe on the prerogatives of the theater and field commanders and

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interagency and interservice rivalries. Although each exception to the principle of unity of command could be rationalized, the end result was considerable wasted resources and unnecessary delays and frictions. Whether the political/psychological damage of unitified command would have been a greater negative is hard, if not impossible, to determine.

While benefiting enormously from our confusing, inefficient and costly command and control arrangements, the enemy was never strong enough, militarily - as long as the US was fully engaged in combat - to expose or exploit dramatically the grievous inherent weaknesses between and within the allied forces. But after US forces departed he was able to take decisive advantage of the inherited "contradictions" built into GVN and RVNAF.

### 1. Advising and Supporting

- Absorbing the US MAAG into and dispersing its functions throughout MACV was one of several factors that impeded and delayed "Vietnamization" for several critical years during the "Big War."
- The multiple and expensive US projects which were designed to support the RVN Pacification Programs (under often changing titles) were diffused among various US civil and military agencies and thus were competitive, overlapping and generally inefficient until the new and powerful CORDS organization was placed under MACV control in mid 1967. The lateness of this change, however, resulted in too much being attempted, too fast by too many, thus overwhelming GVN and RVNAF.

### 2. GVN and RVNAF

- Over time both GVN and RVNAF were molded increasingly along US lines; when the American advisors were withdrawn abruptly, neither had the depth of leadership, experience, or means to carry on effectively with US ways and it was too late to develop their own.
- The RVNAF command and control procedures and practices, while generally suitable for small scale relatively static combat, for the most part were hopelessly inadequate for large scale mobile war; the enemy exploited this deficiency in 1971 in Laos (Lamson

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719), at Dong Ha-Quang Tri (Easter 72), and finally in the spring of 1975. Neither with nor without US advice were they able to solve the conflicting demands of both territorial and mobile warfare.

- Presidents Diem and Thieu, as well as the itinerant GVN leaders between them, often and deliberately violated the chain of command and issued orders directly to subordinate commanders; naturally the RVNAF corps commanders ignored the Joint General Staff (JGS) when they so desired. The JGS had too little authority, power, or prestige to function effectively.

### 3. Coalition Warfare

- Basically, for political and psychological reasons, the cardinal principle of unity of command (effort) was flagrantly violated in Southeast Asia and even within South Vietnam; the substitute formula of "cooperation and coordination" between national units was unduly costly in time, tempers, efficiency, monies and blood. That it worked at all is a tribute to the dedication, hard work and commonsense of a large number of soldiers at all levels of command.
- The Annual Combined Campaign Plan (CCP) was designed to coordinate and to arrange the efforts of all the allied forces in RVN; the evidence examined indicated that it fell short of expectations and that the war was primarily a highly decentralized one with widely varied approaches and results.

### 4. The US Joint War

- In the early days of the US involvement in RVN, the US country team in Saigon existed in name more than it did in fact. Each agency marched to the beat of its parent drummer in Washington; small wonder that most people and programs were usually out of step with each other. Over time relations, coordination, and effectiveness improved.
- Dividing the conduct of the war between PACOM and MACV was unsound, wasteful and often counterproductive. The situation

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would have been much worse if the senior commander and their staffs had not worked hard to "cooperate and coordinate."

- Hawaii was too far from both Indochina and Washington to play a significantly constructive role in the daily - sometimes hourly - intercourse between JCS and MACV; on balance, CINCPAC was a superfluous link in the chain of command.
- MACV was never a truly joint headquarters but was heavily Army; Control and intelligence was improved significantly in 1972 when 7th AF Headquarters "moved in" with MACV.

### 5. Control of US Airpower

- The fragmented command and control of the massive allied air power available in Southeast Asia precluded proper exploitation of its inherent flexibility, range, speed and firepower and thus was counterproductive; the "single manager" concept for US air power in RVN, agreed to in 1968, proved to be more form than fact except for a relatively short period.
- The closely held planning and tight control of the Linebacker II operations by JCS and Headquarters Strategic Air Command resulted in tremendous coordination and control problems among the Headquarters of PACOM, MACV and 7th US Air Force; it probably also resulted in unnecessary losses in aircraft and crews.
- The centralized control of airpower in a theater of operations, outside of NATO, apparently is still a sensitive and unresolved issue.

### 6. Communications

- The communications equipment and people eventually provided to control and support the war in Southeast Asia were plentiful, expensive, and generally quite efficient. Starting with rags, the communicators ended with unnecessary riches.
- The wealth and ready availability of electronic communications resulted in a veritable flood of messages to, from and within RVN, many of which were of a trivial nature, aided and abetted by the US (and RVNAF) tendency towards poor communications security.

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### 7. The USG and the Joint Chiefs of Staff

- Short of the President, no single official or agency had the responsibility and authority to coordinate and supervise, on a daily basis, the heterogeneous USG bureaucracy involved in the complex political-military conflict in Southeast Asia.
- In principle, civilian control of the military was never a significant issue; the major irritant was and still is, - just who within the bureaucracy should exercise, in degree and kind, control over which military functions?
- The JCS played a necessary and difficult, but far from decisive, role in the war. With some justice they were charged with being mere "conduits" and "rubber stamps" for CINCPAC and COMUSMACV.
- While loyally supporting the field commanders the JCS failed to provide adequate and timely guidance and meaningful supervision. Conversely, they apparently failed to translate and present convincingly military imperatives to their civilian chiefs. (Those remain as unresolved dilemmas.)
- Interservice jousting for roles, missions and funds continued through and beyond the war in Southeast Asia at some unmeasured cost in effectiveness and resources.
- The establishment or acceptance of inherently weak command and control arrangements by USG, JCS, and MACV in some respects reflected the general US approach to the war: do only the minimum necessary if and when required, to avoid defeat.

### J. LESSONS

- Unity of command (effort) remains as one of the cardinal principles of war across the entire spectrum of conflict.
- Coalition warfare - a basic tenet of US strategic policy - inherently is extremely difficult to coordinate and control; expedient compromises may suffice during periods of low to mid-intensity conflict, but inevitably will result in grievous fractures under heavy political-military pressure.

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- Despite the hard-earned "lessons" of World War II, Korea and Vietnam the USG, and especially the military, have not resolved satisfactorily joint warfare doctrine, especially with regard to control of air power.
- The costly lessons learned from the command and control shortcomings in Southeast Asia have potential value for both political and military leaders and planners; in varying degrees they are applicable to preparing for any future conflict, be it in the 3d world or in Western Europe.
- The enormous power (political, diplomatic, moral, economic, technological and military) of the US can never be exercised with even near maximum effect unless there is a suitable agency, with adequate responsibility and authority in Washington, to plan, coordinate, and effectively supervise its employment; but it can not become dominated by any single voice, agency, or point of view.
- The JCS and the Services must search for and agree to realistic doctrine and techniques for providing necessary military guidance, supervision and support to the field commanders; otherwise, in a future crisis the military is likely to lose yet more influence and control.

CHAPTER 11 ENDNOTES

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79. Westmoreland, Soldier, pp. 415, 416.
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85. Ibid; see General Westmoreland's remarks about ambassadors as "Field Marshals" in his book Soldier and the BDM interview.
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87. Adm. Sharp, supra note 76, pp. 43-51.
88. Report on the War p. 72; Westmoreland Soldier, pp. 76, 261, 334.
89. In his book Soldier and interview, Westmoreland made a number of remarks about the prerogatives of the field commander.
90. Interview with General William E. Momyer, October 11, 1979, concerning the poorly coordinated and costly air campaigns, to include Linebacker II.
91. Report on the War, pp. 101-103.
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93. Several discussions with LTG (Ret.) Donald H. Cowles at BDM.
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99. General William W. Momyer, USAF (Ret.), Air Power in Three Wars (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1978), pp. 39-61, 337-340.
100. Ibid; interview with Gen. Momyer, October 11, 1979.
101. Synthesis of BDM research and analysis of multiple written and oral sources, to include interviews with senior officers of all services.
102. LB Johnson's exaggerated fear of provoking PRC and USSR is a major theme of such military officers as Adm. Sharp, Generals Westmoreland, Vogt, and Momyer. In a BDM interview January 9, 1979, Ambassador U. Alexis Johnson stated that he believed the tight control by the President can be traced back to the Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962. "He had absolute power in his hand, and it could bring absolute destruction." Ambassador Johnson said that in selecting targets in Vietnam, the President "went too far."
103. Interviews with Westmoreland, August 1979.
104. Interview with Momyer, October 1979.
105. Actually the "Single Manager" arrangement which was forced by the "siege" of Khe Sanh only became fully effective in late March 1968 after the crisis was past. See LTG K.G. McCutcheon, "Marine Aviation in Vietnam," in BG Edwin H. Simmons, The Marines in Vietnam: 1954-1973. History and Museums Div., USMC (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1974), pp. 176-178.
106. Interviews with LTC (Ret.) Michael Costino, Army Master Aviator with two tours in Vietnam; and interview with Momyer.
107. Personal experience of Col. (Ret.) Thomas A. Ware, USA (Ret.) who had three tours in Vietnam as Ranger Advisor, and Bn and Bde Cmdr.
108. Interview with Momyer.
109. A major theme of General Momyer's in his Air Power. General Westmoreland in his memoirs, writes about being "lectured" by Gen. Curtis LeMay, who was then CSAF; the issue is also discussed in Eckhardt's Command and Control.
110. Report on the War, p. 126.

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111. Interview with Momyer; and see his Air Power, pp. 303-305.
112. Observation of Colonels Costino and Ware.
113. Interview with MG George A. Godding, US Army (Ret.) at BDM, December 17-20, 1979.
114. Interviews with Generals Momyer and Westmoreland.
115. Interview with Momyer, and LTC Costino; also Momyer, Air Power, pp. 321-324.
116. Interview with General Taylor, who stated that he personally recommended to President Johnson that the members of the JCS be asked to sign an assurance that Khe Sanh would not fall.
117. BDM Interview with Westmoreland.
118. Momyer, Air Power, p. 309.
119. Ibid. p. 309. However, CG 7th Air Force did not gain op con over the 1st MAW. Instead the DEPCOMUSMACV for Air became single manager for fixed-wing assets. LTG McCutcheon, who then commanded 1st MAW, described the CINCPAC directive in these terms:

The directive was approved by CinCPac and went into effect in March 1968. The system required the 1st MAW to identify its total sortie capability to Seventh Air Force daily on the basis of a 1.0 sortie rate, that is, one sortie per day for each jet aircraft possessed. Previously the 1st MAW had fragged its aircraft against air support requests received from the Marine ground units, and then identified daily to Seventh Air Force the excess sorties that would be available. These were then fragged by Seventh Air Force on either out-of-country missions or in-country in support of forces other than Marine units. The majority of air support could be forecast and planned in advance except the requirements that might be generated by troops in contact with the enemy. These requirements could be met by extra sorties, scrambles from the hot pad, or by diverting aircraft in the air.

See McCutcheon, supra note 105.

120. Interview with Westmoreland; Adm. U.S.G. Sharp, USN (Ret.), Strategic Direction of the Armed Forces (Newport, R.I.: Naval War College, 1977), p. 51.
121. Interview with Momyer; McCutcheon, supra notes 105 and 119.

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122. Momyer, Air Power, p. 99.
123. Interviews with Momyer, Corcoran and Cowles.
124. For example, Joint Army-Air Force tests, such as JAWS.
125. Collins, Development, supra note 8, p. 10.
126. Ibid, pp. 36-38.
127. Ibid, p. 49.
128. Eckhardt, pp. 60, 61.
129. Johnson, "Random Thoughts. . .," supra note 56.
130. Report on the War, p. 61.
131. MG Alfred M. Gray Jr., USMC. Then-Colonel Gray commanded the 4th Marines and was ashore in Saigon directing the Marine-supported evacuation of Americans and US-sponsored Vietnamese. General Gray described the chaotic conditions that prevailed, and lack of prior meaningful Embassy planning, the inability to communicate with local supporting agencies, and the direct link with Washington that often helped to confuse matters on the scene. BDM interview with MG Gray, Commanding General, Marine Corps Development Center, MCDEC, Quantico, VA, 9 August 1979.
132. Interviews with Generals Taylor, Westmoreland, MG DeWitt Smith, MG Gray, Ambassador U. Alexis Johnson and others who were involved in high level decisions.
133. Interview with Westmoreland.
134. This paragraph is based on a number of discussions with senior and mid-level military officers, both active duty and retired.
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136. Report on the War, pp. 61, 62.
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147. Interview with Taylor.
148. See Kissinger, White House for comments on President Nixon's decision-making process and habits.
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155. Sharp, supra note 76, p. 66.
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## CHAPTER 12 THE ADVISORY EFFORT

The total effort by US advisers contributed directly and immeasurably to the development and modernization of the Vietnamese Armed Forces.<sup>1/</sup>

General Cao Van Vien, 1977

The American advisory effort was "a lamentable disaster that contributed largely to the eventual debacle in Vietnam. . . a gigantic con trick foisted on American public opinion."<sup>2/</sup>

Former Prime Minister  
Ky, 1976

### A. INTRODUCTION

For a quarter of a century US military forces conducted a remarkable advisory effort in Vietnam. This was not the first advisory experience; US advisers had been involved elsewhere (notably in the Greek Civil War and in the Philippines), but the Vietnamese experience stands out for the magnitude and duration of the effort. The roles filled by advisors in Vietnam varied from supplying materiel and technical assistance to virtual command of Vietnamese units and strategic planning for the war.<sup>3/</sup> From modest beginnings, the advisory effort grew in numbers of people and quantity of resources employed until it exceeded any previous US advisory commitments and culminated in the massive pacification and Vietnamization programs discussed in Volume V. Yet, despite the variety of roles and the magnitude of effort, the program was ultimately a failure: the assisted nation was not able to stand on its own. It is therefore important to examine and understand the reasons for this failure before the US considers the use of advisors in a new situation.

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### B. THE ENVIRONMENT

Although the environment in which the advisor operated is discussed in depth in Volume II, several key aspects of this environment should be kept in mind while evaluating the US advisory effort.

First, South Vietnam as an independent political entity was an artificial creation of the Geneva Conference of 1954.<sup>4/</sup> Second, although a product of the Geneva Conference, the Geneva Accords did not provide any legal basis for a separate South Vietnam in the political sense; in fact, the accords explicitly stated that the military demarcation line was not to be interpreted as a political boundary, and called for national elections in 1956 to reunify the country.<sup>5/</sup> Whether these national elections were actually expected to create national unity is debatable <sup>6/</sup> and ultimately irrelevant because the elections were never held. The point is that the Government of South Vietnam had no natural constituency, political power base or legitimacy.

Added to this was an inability of the GVN to disassociate itself from the colonial past or an imperialist "Big-brother." In contrast, the Viet Cong and the DRV held the psychological advantage in the contest for Vietnamese loyalty by being identified with the Viet Minh or the forces of national liberation.<sup>7/</sup>

Finally, the GVN was immensely corrupt (by US standards) and elitist; it proved incapable of expanding its political power base or extending its popularity.<sup>8/</sup> What support it received was largely negative: either a rejection of the Viet Cong whose promises proved false and whose methods of recruitment, taxation, administration and reprisal became increasingly unpopular, especially after the Tet Offensive of 1968; or the passive acceptance of the GVN reflecting a desire for peace under any government.<sup>9/</sup>

Not too surprisingly, the armed forces which served the series of corrupt and unpopular governments were not notably successful or admirable. Despite the undoubted capacity of individual Vietnamese soldiers to perform courageously and endure hardships (facts amply demonstrated by North Vietnamese units and the VC) and the occasional examples of ARVN successes, the

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Army of the Republic of Vietnam was generally weak and ineffective. Built from scratch after the Geneva Conference, the ARVN lacked organization, training, and the necessary support systems. Less obvious but even more critical to its fighting ability, the ARVN lacked motivation, morale, leadership, and loyalty to the GVN. Without these latter qualities, the rectification of deficiencies in training, organization, firepower and support systems were to prove insufficient.

### C. HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

#### 1. Introduction

Throughout the period of US involvement in Vietnam, 1950-1975, the US was motivated by a desire to contain the spread of communism in Asia. The US sought to counter the communist threat in a variety of ways through a variety of programs that reflected changing perceptions of the threat, changes in strategy for dealing with that threat, and changing political realities at home and abroad. These changes in national objectives had a direct effect on the institutions and the roles assigned to US advisors in South Vietnam and resulted in a great variety of programs, including civil as well as military activities, in some cases tailored to the diversity of Vietnamese society.

In the years overlapping with French presence (1950-1956), US dislike of colonialism and French disinterest in American operational assistance inhibited US participation in the war. Once South Vietnam became independent, however, the US intervened directly and actively, first with advisors, next with combat support units, and eventually with US combat forces on a major scale. This commitment, however, lasted a relatively short time and by 1975 the US had withdrawn not just combat forces but advisors as well. This section attempts to outline the major changes in the advisory effort.

#### 2. The Period of French-American Cooperation

Military assistance and advice to the Vietnamese began indirectly in 1950. In an effort to contain communism in Southeast Asia, the US

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established the Military Assistance Advisory Group (MAAG) Indochina, to administer the delivery of Army materiel to the French Expeditionary Corps in Indochina. There is no evidence of any high US official arguing that any significant commitment threshold was being crossed.<sup>10/</sup> By 1955 \$746 million worth of materiel had been delivered to the French.<sup>11/</sup> The United States, however, neither controlled nor observed its use after it was in French hands. Further, US military and economic assistance were provided to the French despite US intelligence assessments that prospects for a French victory in Indochina were poor, probably in the hope that with a prompt and coordinated program the French might somehow succeed.<sup>12/</sup>

After the Geneva Accords, the French and MAAG worked together to develop and train armed forces for the newly created GVN through the Training Relations and Instructions Mission (TRIM). Given the restrictions on foreign military personnel imposed by the Geneva accords, TRIM was tiny and wholly inadequate for a task of such magnitude. It was further hampered by the differing objectives of the two sponsors, France and the US. This early period is described by an officer who was on the scene, who also supplies some of the rationale for having organized ARVN along American lines:

With reference to the relations between MAAG Indochina and the French High Command, you may recall that MAAG Indochina was established primarily as a logistic agency responsible for passing on to the French the equipment which the US was loaning them for the prosecution of the war in Indochina. General O'Daniel tried to have the French agree to allow the US military some voice in the conduct of operations without success. The French resisted O'Daniel until shortly after Dien Bien Phu when they agreed to have liaison officers from three US services at their theatre headquarters in Saigon (EMIFT). After the US joint chiefs agreed to the arrangement, General Shepherd asked to send a marine on the same assignment; I was that officer. Thus, while the French were pleased to receive our supplies they were not the least bit interested in our advice or other form of participation in the conduct of their operations.

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After the Geneva Agreement, we went through a transition period wherein we (US) gradually assumed responsibility for the reorganization and training of the Vietnamese. We established a Training, Relations and Instruction Mission, (TRIM) wherein US and French officers worked together to sort things out. Relations within TRIM were varied. Mine, in the Navy section, were most cordial; but, I suspect, this was due largely to the fact that I spoke French and was a graduate of the Ecole Superieure de Guerre.

With reference to the organization, equipment and training of the Vietnamese armed forces, the French had organized Vietnamese ground forces in units no larger than battalions. The logistic support and administrative structure of the Vietnamese army was essentially French. With the departure of the French it became essential for these functions to be assumed by the Vietnamese. The easiest way this could be done was by organizing Vietnamese forces along the US lines although with some modifications. You may also recall at that time the number of US military personnel we could have in Indochina was limited by the Geneva Agreement. We were able to augment these only by the creation of a Temporary Equipment Recovery Mission (TERM) but, even this augmentation spread our advisors pretty thin...hence more reason for not going too far away from US organizational concepts and all the related publications that treat training and logistics requirements.13/

Not all Americans enjoyed cordial relations with the French. Edward Lansdale joined the TRIM staff as a division chief and found that the French half of his staff was packed with intelligence agents who soon presented the US embassy with a long list of complaints about him.14/ In early 1956 the French withdrew entirely from Vietnam, and TRIM collapsed.

### 3. Expansion of the US Advisory Effort

At this point the US decided on its own to carry the burden of creating a viable South Vietnam. The key to this policy was the advisory effort, a program that was conceived of as a means to assist the GVN create a modern and effective defense.

According to General Maxwell Taylor, the US War Plan for Southeast Asia (1955-1959) dictated how ARVN troops would be organized,

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equipped, and trained to fight, and those plans were consistent with US experience in Korea. China was viewed as the threat to the region, not Hanoi.15/

General Paul Harkins described some of the early difficulties facing US advisors in RVN:16/

...in the beginning we went in as an advisory group (military speaking) to train the S.V.N. how to fight as an army to stem a communist take-over of another country. Little did we know that the SVN Forces had no idea of senior command, of offensive tactics, [sic] of fighting from 8:00 AM to 12:00 - then a siesta, and fighting from maybe 2:30 PM or 3:00 PM to maybe 5:00 PM. To the American way of fighting a war - this was ridiculous - but hard to change. Again, little did we know that all the SVN Generals with the exception of one or two - although appointed as generals by Diem - were utterly opposed to him. Thus their enthusiasm for winning the war for Diem was least on their minds.

...They had beautiful charts in their War Rooms - but trying to get them out to the front - to see if the charts were right took a lot of persuasion.

...You can just picture a Southern Georgia ammunition sergeant, Special Forces type, trying to teach a group of Montanyards [sic] from seven different tribes how to shoot a carbine or machine gun or run a radio. They spoke 7 different languages - so the instruction went from southern English, to Vietnamese, to French, to seven interpreters, then back. Later we found out they couldn't even count.

Wilfred Burchett characterizes the US advisory effort as a means to control the war without the use of American "cannon fodder."17/ Certainly at that point American policy makers did not plan or anticipate the participation of US combat forces in Vietnam. That these forces were eventually required suggests that advisors failed in their task of organizing, training, and equipping the South Vietnamese forces and developing their combat effectiveness to such an extent as to "enable them to maintain internal security and to defend the nation against outside aggression."18/



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By the end of 1958 the MAAG reported that the combat posture of ARVN had improved to a marked degree and compared favorably with other army forces in Southeast Asia. Unfortunately the Civil Guard and Self Defense Corps were never brought to the stage of development at which they might have relieved the army of the internal security mission for which its new-found organization, training, and equipment were rendering it unfit.19/

An early task for the US team was to recover and dispose of the materiel left behind by the French. For this task the US created the Temporary Equipment Recovery Mission (TERM). TERM pursued this task and the longer-term mission of building up a South Vietnamese logistical system until it was superseded by a larger MAAG in 1960.20/ This new MAAGV, still less than 1000 strong, took over the total advisory effort and TERM was phased out.

By the end of 1961, MAAGV was nearly 3,000 strong. It was engaged in a variety of programs including the creation of Civil Guard and Self Defense Corps, but its primary mission, as determined in Washington, had been to build a strong conventional army to repel a Korean-style invasion from the North.21/ It was assumed, naively, that good conventional forces would also serve as good counterinsurgency forces. In fact, however, an entirely different structuring of forces stressing small, mobile, local units was necessary for effective counterinsurgency rather than the mirror image of US heavy divisions which the US actually created in the ARVN.22/

The reasons for this misplaced emphasis by US policy makers are many. Chief among them are: 1) failure to learn from the French experience, 2) failure to perceive the seriousness of the counterinsurgency threat, 3) superficial similarities to the Korean experience leading Americans to believe tactics could be transplanted, and 4) over-confidence in ourselves which tended to tune out Vietnamese voices and discourage careful study and analysis of the situation or problem. It has also been suggested that American's own philosophy of "self-determination" made it difficult for Americans to engage in military actions against the people inside South Vietnam; American leaders prefer to deal with clear cases of external aggression.

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By the end of 1961, the recognition of the need for greater emphasis on counterinsurgency forces had finally penetrated to Washington. By then it was too late to reorganize the ARVN completely, so the United States attempted a two-pronged approach: to continue to provide support and assistance to the regular forces and simultaneously to develop counterinsurgency forces. This continued from 1961 to 1965. To achieve this, the numbers of US advisors involved in Vietnam were greatly expanded; greater ARVN competence was equated with greater numbers of US advisors.<sup>23/</sup> US leaders further argued that as a result of this expansion in the advisory effort, not only would the US have greater influence on the ARVN but the US would also be better informed of the situation.

The expansion in advisory personnel was naturally accompanied by an expansion in effort. Secretary MacNamara made the decision to establish battalion advisory teams and province advisors, to provide greater support for civil guards and to expand civil programs. There were several views of the roles and missions of the RVN paramilitary forces:<sup>24/</sup>

- The Michigan State University Advisory Group, under contract to USOM, viewed the Civil Guard as a civilian national police that could enforce laws, control subversion, collect intelligence, and establish GVN ties with rural areas.
- President Diem envisaged the Civil Guard as a large, powerful military organization accountable to him that would counter ARVN's power.
- The USMAAG considered the Civil Guard to be a mobile counter-subversion force to relieve the Army of internal security functions so that it could focus on the threat from the North.

In 1962, MAAG was transformed into the US Military Assistance Command, Vietnam. The role of US advisors in this expanded effort remained one of training, guiding and supporting the Vietnamese in civil and military programs.

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### 4. Height of US Involvement

The active participation of increasing numbers of US combat troops in Vietnam from 1965-1969 almost completely overshadowed the advisory effort, and, with the arrival of US ground forces, the role of US advisors began to change. Training was subordinated to operations, and US advisors with the ARVN essentially fulfilled a liaison function, maintaining contact and coordination between Vietnamese and American combat forces and providing US logistical and tactical support for the ARVN units to which they were attached.25/

It was during this phase of the war, however, that unified civilian-military teams were finally established under CORDS (Civil Operations and Revolutionary Development) in 1967. This coordination of effort was a major step forward as it indicated that Washington had at last recognized that the guerrilla war and pacification were integral parts of the total war and not separate wars.26/ The political nature of the war for Vietnam was beginning to be recognized. CORDS enabled the previously splintered advisory efforts to become more cohesive and directed; it produced a more effective and intensive pacification effort which achieved some notable successes.27/

### 5. Vietnamization

As the US sought to extricate itself from direct involvement in Vietnam, the role of advisors once again became particularly visible. In theory, at least, the US sought once more (as it had from 1956 to 1965) to make the ARVN capable of holding its own against both external and internal communist expansion. In fact, however, US withdrawal was timed to please domestic demands for an end to US involvement and followed a schedule determined in Washington, not Vietnam.28/ US advisors became, in effect, a face-saving cover for American withdrawal, a rear-guard, but the success of their efforts was not seriously considered; the withdrawal was to continue on schedule regardless of results. General Taylor observed that in the end the absence of US advisors was a serious problem that was never overcome. He remarked that the Nixon formula was not a bad one had we lived up to it and not stripped out every man.29/

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### 6. Summary

Throughout US involvement in Vietnam, the US concern was with the containment of communism. To achieve this objective, the US chose to support and assist the non-communist government of South Vietnam - but this government lacked the loyalty of its people and proved incapable of building a firm, popular base. The point is that: "no matter how generous our military support and assistance, a country that is not politically cohesive and lacks legitimacy cannot achieve stability. There must be strong political and bureaucratic institutions to work with. We cannot significantly alter the nature of a society or its regime merely by volunteering our support."30/

The US advisory effort was for the most part directed at the symptom, the military situation, rather than the disease which was political. By concentrating the advisory effort on military training and support, the US was misdirecting its resources; no amount of training, reorganization or logistical support was going to solve the problems of low morale, motivation or loyalty in the ARVN.31/ Ambassador U. Alexis Johnson described the fundamental problem in these terms:

As for the military, it goes back to the establishment of the MAAG. They were excellent in Western Europe, they advised on weapons, but they were not appropriate for Vietnam.

...We had no philosophy on how to train the Vietnamese.32/

### D. THE ADVISOR

#### 1. Selection

The selection of advisors was guided by the principle that generalists rather than specialists were best suited to the complicated task of advising a foreign army on a wide range of activities.33/ Since most Army officers are generalists, this principle tended to encourage the attitude that any Army officer was therefore qualified to serve as an advisor. As a

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result, no vigorous selection process was instituted and the Army relied upon what were essentially standing operating procedures for the assignment of officers. The situation which resulted is described by Douglas Kinnard in this book The War Managers:

Staffing the advisory effort in Vietnam was an uphill battle from the outset. In the early stages the effort was slowed by difficulties in advisor selection and training, a general lack of advisor motivation, and a failure to appreciate the problems, related to advising societies with an alien culture.34/

The problems of selection were at first mitigated by the perceived need of officers to get "counterinsurgency" experience. It was widely believed that a tour of duty in Vietnam as an advisor was necessary for career advancement. Later, however, when US combat troops became engaged, prestige, promotion and security were all greater for US troop commanders than for advisors. Ambitious officers naturally avoided service as advisors.35/ It is important, not to equate ambition with competence, but a general decline in the prestige and popularity of advisor assignments harmed the already weak system of selection.

### 2. Training

Training for advisors can best be described as minimal. Although the need for preparation and some specialized training was recognized fairly early on, the pressure for increasing numbers of advisors discouraged the investment in time and resources that was required for a rigorous training program. Emphasis, in other words, was placed on quantity rather than quality. For example, the Army opted for a three-month language training course which gave officers a smattering of conversational Vietnamese but did not prepare them for effective, professional communication with their counterparts. This lack of language capability is repeatedly stressed by a variety of sources as being a serious handicap.36/ It is also stressed by Vietnamese sources that an advisor's usefulness was very short lived. It took so long for advisors to adjust to Vietnam and learn enough about the people, situation, enemy, etc., that their tours were virtually over by the time they were ready to contribute meaningfully.37/

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This situation could only have been improved by much more intensive, lengthy and specialized training, or by longer tours of duty, or both.

### 3. Motivation, Morale, and Attitudes

According to some critics, most advisors in Vietnam were motivated primarily by concern for their careers.<sup>38/</sup> Even those officers interested in the advisory experience were interested in it only in the context of career development. They were anxious to get their "ticket punched", so to speak, with time spent in counterinsurgency. This career orientation had a significant impact upon the way in which officers perceived and carried out their duties in Vietnam. First and foremost, primary concern for career advancement inherently encourages a tendency to please ones' superiors. In Vietnam this sometimes occurred to the detriment of the best interests of the ARVN and Vietnam and of the US as well. Furthermore, it was commonly thought by advisors that, in view of the optimistic assessment of the situation in Vietnam by senior officers in Saigon, negative reports on conditions in an advisor's own province, district, or ARVN unit would reflect badly on the advisor; i.e., hurt his career. "The official spirit was one of optimism; 'negativism' was frowned upon. Too much criticism could show a lack of progress and result in a poor efficiency report."<sup>39/</sup> Those officers who did not follow the "party line" but spoke out forcefully in an effort to revise official perceptions at higher levels, found their careers were jeopardized, reinforcing the tendency in other advisors to give their superiors exactly what they wanted to hear. It has even been argued that "as the war effort began to fall apart in late 1962 and early 1963, the Military Assistance Command in Saigon set out to crush its own best officers in the field on behalf of its superiors in Washington. It was a major institutional crisis, but Washington was unaware of it. . . the Saigon Command systematically crushes all dissent from the field; the military channels did not brook dissent or negativism."<sup>40/</sup>

The stress on favorable reports on the ARVN was not only a function of the desire to please superiors. It was also a direct outgrowth of the "can do" tradition of the US Army as a whole. The approach to Vietnam from top to bottom was not one of carefully studying a problem to determine

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first if a given task was possible and second how it could best be accomplished, but instead one of charging in on the assumption that the US Army could do anything - especially given enough will power and enough fire power.41/

From the most senior levels on down to the captains and majors in the field, American advisors were filled with over-confidence. The American military entered Vietnam believing it had never lost a war and implicitly believing that it could not lose one. The failure of the French failed to alert Americans to the quagmire in Indochina, largely because Americans had insufficient respect for the French military, and, furthermore, assumed that the French had failed largely because they were colonialists.42/ The fresh success of the US in Korea and the apparent similarities between the two situations further reinforced this over-confidence.43/

Last but not least, the average American advisor viewed the Vietnamese environment as not only alien but also inferior. This attitude naturally had a negative impact on morale, deterring advisors from extending for second tours of duty. Even more significant, this attitude, combined with the brief duration of an officer's tour, often reduced an advisor's interest in learning Vietnamese or studying Vietnamese culture, society and history; it was always possible and easier to rely on Vietnamese translators. Yet despite the increasing number of Vietnamese with English language capability, US advisors without adequate language capability were isolated from much information. Cultural ignorance also created a communication gap between advisors and the Vietnamese. Douglas Kinnard gives a number of examples of the kind of cultural differences which could restrict understanding between Americans and Vietnamese.44/ One particularly critical difference, under the circumstances, was the difference between American and Vietnamese concepts of leadership.45/ Finally, where an advisor's sense of superiority was evident, it often cut him off from the valuable experience the Vietnamese had gained in their long struggle; Vietnamese would not risk losing face by being scorned if they offered advice based on their own experiences.

Not all officers suffered from these motivational and attitudinal handicaps. Many were dedicated to helping Vietnam, became proficient in Vietnamese and studied Vietnamese culture. However, the system of selection and the hasty training virtually ensured that the officers with a genuine interest in Vietnam and, therefore, a clearer understanding of its problems and a stake in seeing that the assessment and reaction to its problems be appropriate, were the exception rather than the rule.

E. THE ADVISOR IN VIETNAM

1. Status and Role from the Vietnamese Point of View

The very term "advisor" had a negative impact on many Vietnamese which Americans failed to recognize; it implied "power behind the throne" something which most Vietnamese commanders were extremely anxious to avoid.<sup>46/</sup> The South Vietnamese were sensitive on this account in view of their colonial past and communist propaganda which portrayed South Vietnamese officials as the lackeys or puppets of an "imperialist" United States. The cultural concern about "saving face" also made it imperative for a Vietnamese commander not to feel subordinate to an American advisor, especially one of lower rank.<sup>47/</sup>

In addition to these psychological factors inhibiting Vietnamese acceptance of American advisors and their advice, was the far more serious real factor of the advisor's relative youth and inexperience. Vietnamese officers with long combat records found it extremely difficult to accept advice from young officers with no combat experience at all.<sup>48/</sup> Vietnamese commanders had been fighting this enemy and in this environment most of their lives; they naturally felt they were the better judges of tactical situations. Furthermore, the Americans themselves kept changing. The average Vietnamese field commander worked with from 20-30 different advisors during the war.<sup>49/</sup> This difference in age and, more importantly, experience between advisors and their Vietnamese counterparts was compounded by fundamental differences in military traditions and strategic theory. The Vietnamese had been schooled in the French tradition which



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emphasized commando tactics "characterized by rapid movement and hasty raids with little or no combat support."50/ In contrast, "the American way was methodical, careful and thorough, characterized by detailed planning and preparation."51/ American efforts to impose their military system on the Vietnamese was often interpreted as a personal insult to Vietnamese abilities.52/

Finally, the American lifestyle often alienated Vietnamese. While it was understood that Americans enjoyed a higher standard of living in the United States, efforts to transplant that life style to Vietnam were considered inappropriate. The Vietnamese felt that in view of the fact that Vietnamese could not share in American luxuries, that the American should do his best to at least conceal his affluence. Conspicuous consumption behavior patterns were resented.53/ The Vietnamese felt that in view of the ideological nature of the conflict "in which a solid popular base was the key to ultimate success, US advisors could have contributed much more had they been in closer contact with the population, and known more about their true aspirations and problems."54/

### 2. Relations with Counterparts

All these differences in perceptions, traditions and attitudes were bound to make for difficulties in the Advisor-Counterpart relationship. Douglas Kinnard goes so far as to say that it was impossible for the culture gap to be bridged "sufficiently to elicit adequate performance from ARVN through the advisory system."55/ Other observers are not so harsh as to believe it completely negated the usefulness of advisors but stress that it did inhibit effective communication and cooperation.56/

Quite apart from the cultural difficulties, the concept of "advisor" was difficult to operationalize. On the one hand, the advisor was supposed to have useful knowledge and skills which the Vietnamese commander needed and did not have. On the other hand, the advisor had no place in the Vietnamese military hierarchy and no authority to ensure his "advice" was taken. The relationship was further complicated by the American control of financial and support resources; Vietnamese commanders felt that advisors could, through their own command structure, facilitate or

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obstruct the delivery of needed resources including equipment, helilift, and tactical support. Advisors, therefore, had implicit but not explicit power. Finally, the advisor was placed in the awkward position of serving two masters; he was usually subordinate in rank to his Vietnamese counterpart and clearly placed with the ARVN unit to assist the Vietnamese commander in his activities, but his own superior, his efficiency rating and his principal loyalty were American. These ambiguities in the advisors role created serious difficulties in the advisor-counterpart relationships.

One of the principal difficulties was a tendency by US advisors to try to exercise operational control over the ARVN unit to which they were attached. Colonel F. J. Kelly claims that "in the early years, their role as advisors rather than operators was not made clear to most Special Forces troops."57/ Instances where US advisors assumed command of Vietnamese units are clearly documented.58/ Whether the US advisors were in fact qualified to assume command or not, such action caused the Vietnamese commander to lose face and reinforced the impression, stressed in communist propaganda, that the South Vietnamese government and officials were not nationalist but instead puppets of American neo-colonialists.

The other extreme in the relationship, however, was just as counterproductive. Too often, US advisors abdicated their influence in favor of maintaining "good rapport" with their Vietnamese counterparts.59/ Where this occurred, identification with the Vietnamese commander's point of view and even personal ambitions could prevent an advisor from providing the fresh perspective and advice he was sent to provide and might even cause the advisor to lose sight of US objectives if and where they differed from those of his particular counterpart. Brigadier General James L. Collins, Jr. suggests that: "In any future situation where advisors are deployed under hostile conditions, the emphasis should be on getting the job done, not merely getting along with the individual being advised."60/

Finally, some advisors sought to influence their counterparts by example. These advisors, considered by many observers to have been among our best, operated on the belief that "the advisor's enthusiasm, dedication and effort could, through diplomatic guidance of his Vietnamese counterpart, successfully buck the system."61/ Unfortunately, "the notion of

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leadership for the South Vietnamese was of a different cultural dimension from the American."62/ While the Vietnamese might well come to admire the American advisors' enthusiasm and effort, they were not necessarily inspired to follow the example; especially at the higher levels, the Vietnamese felt that the point of achieving higher rank was to avoid risks and discomfort - not to take the chances and engage in the activities which the advisors advocated by example.63/ Some observers even go so far as to suggest that this very outpouring of energy and enthusiasm by advisors actually overwhelmed the Vietnamese and made it more difficult for them to operate.64/

In short, the American advisor in Vietnam had the difficult, perhaps almost impossible, task of overcoming major cultural differences in order to establish a relationship which was a balance between good rapport with their counterparts and professional integrity. An advisor had to understand the culture and people well enough to know not only what their objectives and needs were, but also how to exert influence most effectively without creating hostility, resentment or inertia.

### 3. Quantity of Advice

During the war years, there was a clear tendency to believe that South Vietnam and the ARVN were in need of more and more advice. This resulted in an expanding advisory effort from less than 300 advisors in 1955 to over 5,000 advisors in 1965.65/ If helicopter units and other combat support personnel are included as advisors, the number exceeded 23,000. Over time the wisdom of this reliance on vast numbers of advisors has come into doubt. It is possible that the United States overwhelmed the Vietnamese in numbers as well as in terms of enthusiasm and activity. Also, the greater the number of advisors, the harder it was for the GVN to project an independent image. Furthermore, as the numbers of advisors increased their quality decreased because the very demand for large numbers of advisors discouraged the development of selective assignment procedures and rigorous training. Evidently the US Army could not afford to invest the time necessary for extensive training if it were to process and deploy over 5,000 advisors each year. Quantity was stressed at the expense of quality.

4. Quality of Advice

The quality of advice given by advisors to the Vietnamese inevitably and unquestionably varied from excellent all the way down to counter-productive. It varied depending on the individual advisor and on the role the advisor was expected to fulfill. Perhaps the most critical factor in determining the quality of advice was whether the advisor was technically qualified for the position in which he was placed. As a general rule, US advisors were highly competent in technical roles such as the use of equipment or the organization of staffs or support services. However, the average US advisor had no combat experience, was unfamiliar with the Vietnamese people and troops, the enemy or the terrain, and was, therefore, far less qualified than his Vietnamese counterpart to make tactical or operational decisions. As a result, US advice tended to be of the highest quality in those areas such as organization, support, weaponry use and communications where the US advisor was more technically competent.

If an advisor did not have the requisite skills to perform his task, the quality of his advice would depend on how rapidly he could acquire the necessary knowledge by learning from the experiences of others -- either the French, his Vietnamese counterparts or his American predecessor. Even where an advisor did have substantial skills and competence in his field, the quality of advice was bound to improve with increased understanding of the situation as could be gained from studying the experiences of others.

Another important factor affecting the quality of advice was the extent to which the advisor made use of available resources, notably intelligence. Colonel Charles K. Nulsen, Jr., in his essay on "Advising as a Prelude to Command," stresses the importance of up-to-date intelligence and the operational flexibility needed to exploit that intelligence.<sup>66/</sup> A good advisor would first have to do his utmost to ensure accurate and up-to-date intelligence, and then to ensure that his advice not only reflected that intelligence but enabled operational flexibility in case new intelligence should come to light.

Finally, the quality of advice was bound to be related to the advisor's sense of dedication and interest in his task. Where an advisor was seriously concerned about improving the effectiveness of the ARVN, he would make the effort to overcome any of his own handicaps or those he encountered in order to provide the very best advice of which he was capable. Most American advisors receive high marks in this area.<sup>67/</sup> However, where ever an officer was motivated primarily by careerism (a common problem in Vietnam according to some sources), <sup>68/</sup> his interest was in serving time, getting his "ticket punched," and in getting out. In such cases, minimum effort was expended to gain the knowledge needed as a basis for quality advice, much less to establish a relationship that ensured such advice would be considered by the Vietnamese counterpart. During the period of major US ground forces involvement in Vietnam, this problem of careerism was aggravated by the fact that most advisors would have preferred to be with US units where promotion was faster. Finally, in cases where an advisor's career was his chief concern, he was least likely to challenge the directives of his superiors - even if from his own observations he could see that US efforts were misdirected. It was the most highly dedicated advisors who were most critical of both the ARVN and US strategy.<sup>69/</sup>

Regardless of an advisor's specific task or personal background and attitudes, however, one constant seems evident: the quality and usefulness of an advisor's advice tended to improve over time. If there was a single fix which could have done more than any other to improve the quality of the advisory effort, it was to extend the tours of duty for advisors from one year to two or more.

##### 5. Effectiveness

The effectiveness of the US advisor depended on a whole range of factors most of which have been discussed in detail above. An advisor had to overcome cultural handicaps and demonstrate professional competence if he was going to establish a good working relationship with his Vietnamese counterparts. Once an advisor had a good relationship, however, he then had to go beyond that by coming to grips with the realities of his situation, developing a firm understanding of the problem and communicating his suggestions to his counterpart.

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At that point an effective advisor's task was complete. If the relationship between the advisor and his counterpart was in fact sound, then his advice would be duly considered and possibly acted upon. If, however, the relationship was weak then an advisor's advice was likely to be ignored. Ignored advice was bound to frustrate an advisor and could cause him to seek to coerce his counterpart into acting upon it. In some cases, as described above, US advisors simply seized operational control of a unit to ensure their advice was followed; in other cases they exerted indirect leverage on the Vietnamese through the US advisor's control of valuable US resources. Some observers feel such leverage was not exerted frequently enough to achieve necessary changes in the ARVN.<sup>70/</sup> In fact, however, such leverage was always implicit when an advisor gave advice and, given the advisor's inexperience in many cases, may actually have caused commanders to follow advice against their own better judgment. Advice, if it is to remain advice, is probably most effective when it is founded on competence alone and not tied to other resources which can interfere with a commander's ability to judge the usefulness of the advice objectively.

On a larger scale, even the most competent, dedicated and effective advisors in the field could not have assured the success of the advisory effort as a whole if US policy in Saigon or Washington failed to understand the problem or prescribed the wrong solutions. Thus, in the critical early years, a failure by US policy makers to realize that counterinsurgency and not an invasion from the North was the immediate threat, resulted in a misdirection of the advisory effort. Likewise, US preoccupation with satisfying domestic needs for a rapid withdrawal of US forces from Vietnam largely prevented the US advisors from achieving maximum results in Vietnamization. Even institutional factors restricted the success of the advisory effort: standard one-year tours of duty, higher rates of promotion for officers with US units, the emphasis on generalists rather than specialists in the Army as whole. Ultimately an individual advisor could fail in his task and contribute to the failure of the entire effort - but only sound policy in Saigon and Washington could make the advisory effort succeed.

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The impact of the US advisory effort was measured by Congressman Paul N "Pete" McCloskey Jr., awarded the Navy Cross in the Korean War and a vocal antiwar opponent of President Nixon's. Mr. McCloskey made his fourth fact-finding tour of Vietnam in early 1975, and he offered his assessment to the Secretary of Defense in a letter, which included these remarks:

I visited four ARVN regiments in the field, in three of the four military regions, and was impressed that American advice and leadership have finally taken hold.

I found numerous examples of aggressive patrolling, daily movement of firing batteries, good common responsibility and coordination of supporting fires, as well as excellent control measures and relationships with the civilian population.

I would like to take this opportunity to commend those U.S. advisers who labored so long and under such frustrating conditions to achieve this result. If South Vietnam falls, which I believe it may, it will not be for lack of a professionalism imparted by U.S. military men to their Vietnamese counterparts. While I feel our policy in Vietnam since late 1964 has been one of the most tragic military misjudgments in our history, I did want you to know of my respect for the job done by so many of our best company-grade officers and NCOs. 71/

### F. MAJOR ADVISORY SUCCESSES AND FAILURES

#### 1. Successes

Despite the perceived need to commit more and more US combat troops to the war in Vietnam and the eventual collapse of the ARVN, the US advisory effort was not an unmitigated failure. In fact, it enjoyed notable successes in achieving a number of its more limited objectives.

Perhaps the first achievement of the advisory effort was the creation of the ARVN itself; a regular army for South Vietnam. This was accomplished relatively quickly, between 1955 and 1959. Unfortunately, while the MAAG had achieved its own objectives of creating an Army on the American model, it was soon realized that this kind of force was not appropriate for the kind of guerrilla war that was being fought in the South. Efforts to train "irregular" forces had to be undertaken.

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As a rule, counterinsurgency and guerrilla warfare is not a forte of the US military. Overall, the US achieved less success against the PLAF(V) than against PAVN(NVA). Nonetheless, individual units and advisors did achieve local, temporary successes. One particularly notable example is that of Frank Scotton who adopted many of the techniques employed by the North Vietnamese themselves. His 38-man platoons were more effective than entire regiments of South Vietnamese regulars and gained such a reputation with the VC, that the VC warned regular units of the NLF to avoid provinces where Scotton's men operated.72/

During the years of US combat forces involvement, the advisors were successful in the liaison role between US and Vietnamese forces. They undoubtedly made it much easier for ARVN and US units to work together and for ARVN forces to receive logistical, tactical and medical support from American units.

Last, but not least, US advisors did experience significant successes in Civil Programs, particularly under CORDS. Civil Programs are discussed in greater detail in Vol. V, Chapter 5, and in Chapter 14 of this volume. The critical aspect of Civil Programs is that ultimately they were the only programs that addressed the underlying political aspects of the conflict in Vietnam. Military difficulties were essentially symptomatic of deeper political failures by the GVN. Solid successes in Civil Programs would have made military advisory efforts less arduous by eating away at the foundations of the VC effort.

### 2. Failures

The failures of the US advisory effort in Vietnam occurred at all levels from the very top where policy decisions were made, to the junior officer operating at the bottom. Failures by individual officers, however, could have been minimized by systemic changes which gave the individual advisor a firmer base from which to work.

The first failure of the advisory effort was misperception of the problem. For the first, critical years of the effort, the United States was fighting the wrong war. Preoccupation with a Korean-like invasion from the North blinded policy makers to the more serious if less visible threat



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of communist insurgency within South Vietnam itself. Even when the need for greater emphasis on counterinsurgency was first recognized, in the early 1960s, it was treated as a separate rather than integral part of the conflict. Not until 1967, with the establishment of CORDS, did coordinated advisory efforts begin to deal with the reality of a conflict in which political and economic issues could not be segregated from the military problems. By then, US military investment was so great that domestic reaction against any US involvement in Vietnam was mounting. It was, in other words, too late.

The second failure of the advisory effort was misdirection of effort. This sprang almost inevitably from the misperception of the problem. Because the US perceived the war as essentially a conventional war to repel invasion, the US created an Army in South Vietnam that in its early years was suited to the task of repelling an invasion but not of fighting the guerrilla war with which it was actually faced. Even more fundamental, the United States failure to perceive the underlining political nature of the struggle ultimately doomed any military efforts. Whereas the time came when a conventional force such as was created in the ARVN proved useful, at no time could the military effort alone have effectively secured South Vietnam against communism - the basic US goal. No amount of American training, no amount of American hardware, and no number of examples by individual American advisors was ever going to create motivation and loyalty in the ARVN or the people of South Vietnam if their own government failed to project an image of being a credible and preferable alternative to communism.

The third failure of the advisory effort was the failure to utilize the experience of others. This occurred at the policy level where the French experience in Indochina was not sufficiently studied, and at the individual advisor level where the advisors themselves tended to make little use of either French or Vietnamese experience. If more respect for the French and the Vietnamese experience had characterized the early years of US involvement, our failure to understand the nature of the war and to concentrate our efforts at the critical points might have been avoided or

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at least shorter lived. Concepts or operations that have failed usually provided clearer lessons than those which succeeded.

The fourth failure of the advisory effort was inadequate care in the selection and training of the advisors. The task facing advisors was immense. Advisors had to work and live in an alien culture. They had to establish mutually respectful relationships with Vietnamese commanders who had many more years of combat experience. They had to give advice on fighting an enemy they did not know or understand, in a terrain they did not know, with troops they did not know. They often had to deal with civil as well as military problems. And through it all they had to maintain sufficient objectivity to be able to report accurately to American superiors and to give advice to their counterparts even if it was going to be unpopular. All this was expected of young, inexperienced officers, many of whom had no combat experience when they started their tour and who had too little language training to be able to communicate on a professional level with their counterparts. Ill-prepared advisors could neither command respect from the Vietnamese nor contribute meaningfully to the war effort. Inadequate language training further handicapped them as it made it difficult to learn rapidly even after they were in country, and tended to isolate the advisor from his environment, cutting him off from valuable sources of information and intelligence. Given the fact that the very presence of US advisors may have undermined the credibility of the GVN, the US should have been intent upon providing advisors only where necessary and then making sure that each advisor was so competent that he enhanced the prestige of the United States and contributed substantially to the war effort.

Finally, the fifth failure of the advisory effort was the failure to make maximum use of our advisors themselves. The problems of inadequate training and language capability could have been partially compensated for if each advisor had been left in Vietnam for much longer. The short tour of duty discouraged many officers from making the investment in language and cultural studies beyond those provided by the Army. It effectively ensured that any individual advisor would be useful for only a few months

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after he had adjusted to his environment and come to understand the problems faced by his counterpart and the ARVN in general. It meant that experience was not cumulative because each year new advisors were being thrown into the conflict and having to learn all over again the lessons which their predecessors had already learned. It discouraged Vietnamese commanders (who had to deal with so many different advisors over time) from developing close, working relationships with any particular advisor. For the most part it prevented good, deep working relationships from developing because, given the cultural differences, one year was not enough time even where intentions on both sides were the best. It certainly made the establishment and maintenance of a reliable intelligence network difficult because the high need for trust in intelligence work did not have time to develop. The system of short tours destroyed continuity in the US advisory effort and ensured that it was dominated by amateurs.

Furthermore, the US failed to use advisory resources in yet another way; it did not give sufficient weight to the assessments made by those advisors who were experienced. In an advisory effort, the traditional military concept of top-down control is not entirely appropriate because the lowest ranking advisors in the field often have access to better information than do their superiors in headquarters. One of the advisors's principal values to the US is his ability to see things for himself and get a feel for a situation first hand. These assets of personal experience must be utilized more if senior officers are to have an accurate and comprehensive picture of the situation. However, advisors reports are only going to be useful if advisors are encouraged to speak up and speak honestly - even if their ideas contradict those of their superiors. Advisors must not perceive their own careers as being served by reporting what superiors want to hear rather than what they actually believe.

The Appendix provides the views of a single observer and reflects the changing perspectives on Vietnam over time.

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### G. INSIGHTS

The initial US advisory effort in RVN (1956-1965) succeeded in developing a regular army (ARVN) of limited competence in conventional warfare, an army that required US combat support to operate with any appreciable efficiency against PLAF (VC) main force units; the ARVN was neither trained nor motivated to target and operate against the communist infrastructure (VCI) which constituted the principal actual threat through 1964.

For whatever reason, lack of funding or lack of sufficient trainable manpower, the police forces in RVN were not trained or equipped by USOM to operate effectively against the guerrilla forces in South Vietnam; coupled with a similar failing in the military, this deficiency on the part of the USG/GVN contributed significantly to the communists' ability to entrench themselves and expand their influence and control throughout the republic.

In general, US advisors to RVN were not selected on the basis of language skills or ability to deal effectively with Asian counterparts, but rather on the basis of military occupational specialty and availability for and vulnerability to an overseas hardship tour.

Military personnel were posted in large numbers to advisory billets in which civilians would have been more appropriate; this situation stemmed from a lack of sufficient numbers of civilians with the proper skills who were willing to serve in a combat zone, balanced by the ready availability of military personnel and the procedures for identifying and tasking them.

In the period of major US involvement (1965-1970), US advisors assigned to RVNAF units provided a useful liaison function, although the quality of their advice varied; advisors in the CORDS, beginning in 1967, contributed significantly to the early development of pacification and, subsequently, Vietnamization.

Among the disadvantages that accrued to the US advisors were the general lack of language training and thorough indoctrination before arriving in RVN; the lack of careful selection to weed out those who may have been ill-suited for advisory duties on professional or personal basis; the

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short one-year tours which, when orientation and R and R time were subtracted, provided less than a year to acquire the wide variety of combat-associated experiences needed to know and understand their counterparts, and to gain in the cooperation needed to do the job.

Advisors often faced a difficult problem in trying to report honestly and accurately: RVNAF counterparts could be embarrassed and lose face in many instances; in other cases senior US officials insisted on favorable reports and discouraged accurate reporting.

### H. LESSONS

Any future advisory effort should rely on a cadre of highly trained specialists rather than a massive effort by amateurs. The use of specialists familiar with the history, culture and government of the country in which they are to serve, fluent in the language which they will have to use, and well trained in advisory techniques would improve the likelihood that the failures of Vietnam could be avoided. Specialists with an understanding of the country to which they are assigned will stand a far better chance of correctly assessing the situation and of prescribing solutions which will address the real problems. Furthermore, such advisors would be more likely to earn the respect of their counterparts and, thereby, to establish a relationship of mutual respect. US prestige and influence can only be enhanced by the employment of fully competent advisors even if their numbers are necessarily limited.

The US military services have demonstrated their professional excellence in training foreign personnel and units in technical skills; they have not performed well in advising in politico-military matters because of their lack of background, training, education, and competence.

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## APPENDIX

### CHANGING PERSPECTIVES ON VIETNAM: A SINGLE OBSERVER OVER TIME REPRESENTATIVE OBSERVATIONS BY JOHN PAUL VANN

YEAR	VANN'S POSITION	COMMENTS ON US POLICY OR POSITION	COMMENT ON GVN/RVNAF	COMMENT ON THE ENEMY
1962-1963	SENIOR ADVISOR, IV CORPS (LTC US ARMY)	THE UNITED STATES IS BACKING A CORRUPT LOSER AND WILL END UP A LOSER TOO. BY GIVING THE ARVN TOO MUCH GEAR - AIRPLANES, HELICOPTERS, ETC. - WE MAY BE HELPING THEM PICK UP BAD HABITS INSTEAD OF TEACHING THEM TO SPEND MORE TIME IN TIME IN THE SWAMPS THAN THE ENEMY.	THE TOP GOVERNMENT POLITICIANS AND THEIR OFFICERS ARE AFRAID TO COME TO GRIPS WITH THE ENEMY. THE ARVN ARE UNWILLING TO TAKE CASUALTIES; THEY ARE FIGHTING ON A PEACETIME FOOTING WITH PEACETIME HOURS.	THEY (THE ENEMY) KNOW WHERE WE ARE, BUT WE NEVER KNOW WHERE THEY ARE. THE ONLY THING LIMITING THE SIZE OF THEIR UNITS AND THE NATURE OF THEIR ATTACKS IS A LACK OF WEAPONS - SO WE OUGHT TO STOP ARMING THEM (BY LOSING WEAPONS TO THEM IN FIRE-FIGHTS).
1964	RETIRED FROM ARMY; CIVILIAN IN THE US	CAMPAIGNED FOR HENRY CABOT LODGE AND LATER AS REPUBLICAN FOR JOHNSON TO DEFEAT BARRY GOLDWATER		
1965	CIVILIAN ADVISOR TO HAU NGHIA PROVINCE; USDM REPRESENTATIVE TO US FORCES, (III CTZ/MR).	US SHOULD NOT INTRODUCE GROUND COMBAT FORCES; VIETNAMESE SHOULD FIGHT THE WAR. US TASK IS NOT TO ESTABLISH A GOOD US IMAGE BUT A GOOD GVN IMAGE. GADGETRY, AIRPOWER, AND ARTILLERY CONTINUE TO BE SUBSTITUTED FOR THE DISCRIMINATE GROUND ACTIONS REQUIRED TO PROSECUTE THIS TYPE OF WAR SUCCESSFULLY. WE ARE SPENDING MORE THAN HALF A MILLION DOLLARS A MONTH ON ARTILLERY AMMO IN HAU NGHIA - AND LESS THAN \$300 A MONTH ON INTELLIGENCE - IF WE REVERSED THE AMOUNTS WE COULD PACIFY THE AREA IN SIX MONTHS.	THE CURRENT GVN DOES NOT HAVE A POPULAR POLITICAL BASE. VIETNAMESE SOLDIERS ARE NOT DOING A FIFTH OF WHAT THEY COULD. ALL LEVELS OF THE RVNAF ARE INFILTRATED WITH VC; SOME OF THE HIGHEST GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS OF THE GVN ARE UNTRUSTWORTHY.	THERE IS A REVOLUTION GOING ON IN THIS COUNTRY - AND THE PRINCIPLES, GOALS AND DESIRES OF THE ENEMY ARE MUCH CLOSER TO WHAT AMERICANS BELIEVE THAN ARE THOSE OF THE GVN. VC MADE SERIOUS MISTAKES IN '64 AND '65; THE NVA WHO CAME DOWN FROM NORTH WERE NOT TRAINED TO DEAL WITH LOCAL PEOPLE, AND RECRUITED AND TAXED TOO HEAVILY.
1966	ONE OF FOUR DIRECTORS, (III CTZ/MR).	ONLY ABOUT 30% OF OUR SOLDIERS ARE ACTUALLY FIGHTING; 70% PROVIDE THE LOGISTIC BASE SO THE US SOLDIER CAN FIGHT THE MOST COMFORTABLE WAR EVER FOUGHT. THE US IS TOTALLY INVOLVED--MILITARILY, ECONOMICALLY--AND IT IS ASSININE NOT TO BE POLITICALLY INVOLVED.	THE BASIC PROBLEM IN VIETNAM IS A CORRUPT AND INEFFICIENT GOVERNMENT. ONLY THE VIETNAMESE CAN PACIFY THE COUNTRY--ONLY A GVN THAT THE PEOPLE CAN ACCEPT CAN DO THAT. RVNAF HAS LITERALLY STOPPED FIGHTING SINCE THE ARRIVAL OF US TROOPS.	THE ENEMY IS STIMULATED, DIRECTED AND LED BY THE COMMUNISTS, BUT THE COMMUNISTS ARE MUCH THE MINORITY; MOST OF THOSE FIGHTING AND DYING ARE PEOPLE WHO HAVE CHOSEN BETWEEN THE VC AND GVN FORCES FOR SOME MARGINAL REASON - MAYBE A BONUS FOR RECRUITMENT, MAYBE A STRAY ARVN ROUND OF ARTILLERY LANDING IN THE VILLAGE AND MAKING THEM ANGRY AT THE GVN.

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YEAR	YAMM'S POSITION	COMMENTS ON US POLICY OR POSITION	COMMENT ON GVN/RVNAF	COMMENT ON THE ENEMY
1967	DEPUTY FOR CIVIL OPERATIONS, CORDS, 11 FFV (111 CTZ/MR).	WE NOW HAVE OURSELVES IN A POSITION WHERE OUR NATIONAL PRESTIGE AND OUR INTERNATIONAL STANDING OR LEADERSHIP REQUIRE SUCCESS IN SOUTH VIETNAM. IT COSTS THE US THE SAME AMOUNT OF MONEY TO FINANCE THE WHOLE RVNAF (700,000 MEN) AS IT COSTS US TO FINANCE ONE US DIVISION IN VIETNAM. THEREFORE, IF WE REDUCED US DIVISIONS AND USED THE SAME RESOURCES TO UPGRADE THE QUALITY OF THE VIETNAMESE TROOPS, WE WOULD HAVE PAID FOR THE EFFORT A DOZEN TIMES OVER.	THE MORE THE US BECOMES INVOLVED, THE LESS THE RVNAF BECOMES INVOLVED.	VC ATTRITION RATES ARE CONTROLLED BY THE VC. APPROXIMATELY 80% OF COMMUNIST CASUALTIES ARE THE RESULT OF ACTIONS INITIATED AGAINST US. IF THE PRICE BECOMES TOO HIGH FOR THEM, ALL THEY HAVE TO DO IS AVOID COMBAT.
1968 (POST TET)	DEPUTY FOR CORDS, 11 FFV (111 CTZ/MR).	US SHOULD PHASE DOWN TO 200,000 TROOPS PRIMARILY BY REDUCING SUPPORT PERSONNEL IN COUNTRIES AND PERFORMING SUPPORT FUNCTIONS IN PHILIPPINES, THAILAND OR THE US.	THE SITUATION IN VIETNAM TODAY GIVES MORE CAUSE FOR OPTIMISM THAN AT ANY TIME SINCE 1961. THE GVN IS MORE HONEST, THE ENEMY IS USING INVASION STRATEGY RATHER THAN INSURGENCY.	THE VC ALSO HAS TROUBLE WITH WITH DESERTION, MALINGERING, REFUSAL TO FOLLOW ORDERS, BANDITRY AND INDOLENCE; VC SUCCESSSES ARE A PRODUCT OF LEADERSHIP.
1969	DEPUTY FOR CORDS, MR IV.	THE GVN PLAN TO BRING 90% OF THE POPULATION UNDER GVN CONTROL HAS A CHANCE OF SUCCESS ONLY IF US FORCES ARE AVAILABLE IN SIZABLE NUMBERS FOR SEVERAL YEARS.	THE PRESENT AREA AND POPULATION CONTROLLED BY THE GVN IS FAR MORE IMPORTANT THAN THAT HELD BY THE ENEMY; INCREASED POPULATION CONTROL BY THE GOVERNMENT WOULD SPREAD GOVERNMENT STRENGTH MORE THINLY AND DECREASE THE MOBILITY AND REACTIVE CAPABILITY OF THE RVNAF. THE REAL PROBLEM IN IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF THE ARVN IS NOT IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF THE TROOPS BUT IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF ABOUT 400 VIETNAMESE OFFICERS.	THERE IS A LOW LEVEL OF LOYALTY FELT BY SOLDIERS OF EITHER SIDE BUT PARTICULARLY BY THE VC. REMARKABLY, THE RATE OF DEFLECTIONS FROM THE ENEMY WITHIN THE DELTA CONTINUES TO RISE.
1970	DEPUTY FOR CORDS, MR IV.	WE'VE GOT THE TIGER CONTROLLED BY ITS TAIL, BUT WE CAN'T LET 'SO AND AND RUN WITHOUT GETTING BITTEN.	A MAJOR CAUSE FOR OPTIMISM IS THE ABILITY OF VIETNAMESE TROOPS TO HOLD TERRITORY FORMERLY CONTROLLED BY THE VC OR THE NORTH VIETNAMESE.	ATTACK DURING BUDDHIST RELIGIOUS HOLIDAY CREATED DEEP AND LASTING ANTAGONISM TOWARD THE VC.

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<u>YEAR</u>	<u>VANN'S POSITION</u>	<u>COMMENTS ON US POLICY OR POSITION</u>	<u>COMMENT ON GVN/RVNAF</u>	<u>COMMENT ON THE ENEMY</u>
1971	SENIOR ADVISOR, II CORPS.	WE DON'T HAVE PACIFICATION HERE IN MR II, WHAT WE HAVE IS A MILITARY OCCUPATION. US ADVISORS MUST ASSIST, INFLUENCE OR CAJOLE THE VIETNAMESE INTO DOING THE JOB THAT THEY ARE SUPPOSED TO DO, AND ATTEMPT TO GET THE GVN TO THE HIGHEST LEVEL OF ACHIEVEMENT TO ENHANCE THE GVN'S CHANCE OF SURVIVAL WHEN AND IF THE US DEPARTS.	THE GOVERNMENT OF SOUTH VIETNAM IS NOT ADMIRER OR RESPECTED BY THE PEOPLE, BUT IT IS HATED LESS THAN THE ENEMY.	THE VIETCONG HAVE ALWAYS BEEN MOTIVATED MORE BY HATRED FOR THE GVN THAN BY IDEOLOGY.
1972	SENIOR ADVISOR, II CORPS.	VIETNAMIZATION IS POSSIBLE BECAUSE THE US CONTRIBUTED SO LITTLE - ONLY 49,000-70,000 FIGHTING FORCES. NAVAL MINING AND TRANSPORT INTERDICTION TO SEAL OFF NORTH VIETNAM CAN OBVIOUSLY HAVE NO SHORT-RANGE IMPACT. I THEREFORE VIEW IT AS A FACE-SAVING GESTURE, COUPLED WITH THE MOST GENEROUS TERMS YET STATED BY THE US, SO THE US CAN TOTALLY WITHDRAW BUT APPARENTLY ON OUR TERMS AND APPARENTLY AS A RESULT OF APPLYING OUR OWN STEPPED UP FORCE.	THE SOUTH VIETNAMESE ARMY HAS BEEN GROWING RAPIDLY AND WILL BE ABLE TO PROTECT THE FEW AMERICANS WHO EVENTUALLY REMAIN BEHIND.	THE ENEMY IS GETTING DESPERATE IN HIS NEGOTIATING STANCE. HIS ONLY HOPE IS FOR THE US PUBLIC TO HAND HIM A VICTORY WHICH HE FAILED TO WIN EITHER POLITICALLY OR ON THE BATTLEFIELD. IT IS MY JUDGMENT THAT THE ENEMY HAS MADE A DESPERATION ATTEMPT TO COERCE THE US INTO MAKING A CONCESSION IN PARIS.
NOTE:		AS A LIEUTENANT COLONEL, JOHN PAUL VANN WAS THE SENIOR ADVISOR IN TAY NINH PROVINCE IN 1963, NOTABLY AT THE BATTLE OF AP BAC. HE RETIRED IN 1964 AND FROM 1966 UNTIL HIS DEATH IN A HELICOPTER CRASH IN RVN IN 1972, HE SERVED IN VIETNAM WITH USAID AND CORDS. HE WAS THE CORPS ADVISOR IN II CORPS AS A CIVILIAN AT THE END. VANN WAS A CONTROVERSIAL INDIVIDUAL, BUT HIS SERVICE IN VIETNAM WAS LONGER AND MORE VARIED THAN THAT OF ALMOST ANY OTHER AMERICAN, HENCE HIS UNIQUE VALUE AS AN OBSERVER.		
SOURCES:		SEE ENDMOTE 73.		



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## CHAPTER 12 ENDNOTES

1. General Cao Van Vien, ARVN, et al., The US Advisor, Indochina Refugee Authored Monograph Program, Prepared for the Department of the Army, Office of the Chief of Military History (McLean, Va.: General Research Corporation, May 31, 1977) p. iii.
2. Nguyen Cao Ky, quoted in Douglas Kinnard, The War Managers, (Hanover, New Hampshire, University Press of New England, 1977), p. 165.
3. General Cao Van Vien, pp. 42-43.
4. William R. Corson, The Betrayal (New York: W. W. Norton, & Co., 1968), pp. 30-35.
5. Guenter Lewy, America in Vietnam (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1978), p. 8.
6. Lewy suggests no one expected early unification of the country through free elections; Corson insists that: "There is no doubt that the participants at Geneva expected the elections to reunify North and South Vietnam." p. 33. When asked whether the people of South Vietnam believed in 1954 that they would be reunited, former GVN Ambassador to the US Bui Diem replied, "Not many paid attention. All Vietnamese wanted to be in one country, but nobody except obstinate communists expected it." BDM study team interview with Ambassador Bui Diem in Washington, D.C. on 8 June 1979.
7. David Halberstam, The Making of a Quagmire (New York: Random House, 1965), p. 38.
8. Kinnard, pp. 83-84.
9. Kinnard, p. 146.
10. Aid for France in Indochina 1950-54, Summary. Department of Defense, United States - Vietnam Relations, 1945-1967 (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1971), Book 1, (IV A2), p. 1. Hereafter DOD US/VN Relations.
11. James Lawton Collins, Jr., The Development and Training of the South Vietnamese Army, 1950-1972 (Washington, D.C.: Department of the Army, 1973), p. 4; DOD US/VN Relations, Book 1, Task IV. A., p. 15 reports that by July 1954 the US had shipped material originally costing 2.6 billion dollars, including over 32,000 vehicles, 360,000 weapons, two aircraft carriers, 438 naval craft, and 500 aircraft.

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12. DOD US/VN Relations, Book 1 (IV A2), p. 14.
13. Letter from Colonel Victor J. Croizat, USMC (Ret.), 11 September 1979, to the BDM Corporation.
14. MG Edward Geary Lansdale, USAF (Ret.), In the Midst of Wars (New York: Harper and Row, 1972), pp. 215-224.
15. Comment by General Maxwell D. Taylor, US Army (Ret.) during a BDM study team interview at his residence on 11 July 1979.
16. Letter from General Paul D. Harkins, US Army (Ret.) to The BDM Corporation, 29 August 1979.
17. Wilfred G. Burchett, Vietnam: Inside Story of the Guerrilla War (New York: International Publishers, 1965), p. 9.
18. General Cao Van Vien, p. 9.
19. DOD US/VN Relations, Book 2, (IV. A.4.), p. 21.
20. Collins, p. 7.
21. Kinnard, p. 88.
22. Cao Van Vien, p. 186 & 194; also Chapter 1, Vol. VI of this study.
23. DOD, US/VN Relations, Book 3 (IV B-3), p. iv.
24. Ibid., Book 2 (IV A4), p. 22.
25. Cao Van Vien, p. 187.
26. Lewy, p. 124-125.
27. See Vol. V, Chap. 5, of this study.
28. Kinnard, pp. 140-147.
29. BDM Interview with General Taylor.
30. Ibid., p. 165.
31. David Halberstam, The Best and the Brightest (New York: Random House Inc., 1969), pp. 678-679.
32. BDM study team interview with Career Ambassador U. Alexis Johnson, BDM Corporation, 9 January 1979.

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33. For a good example of the breadth expected of US advisors, see Francis J. Kelly, US Army Special Forces 1961-1971, Vietnam Studies (Washington, D.C.: Department of the Army, 1972), p. 35.
34. Kinnard, p. 89.
35. Lewy, p. 168.
36. For examples see Cao Van Vien, pp. 31-32, 183, 192, 193, & 196 and Lewy, p. 168. This point was also brought out in BDM interviews with MG Charles Horner, Col. Thomas Ware, BG. Donald D. Blackburn, all US Army (Ret).
37. Cao Van Vien, pp. 32, 154, 155, 185, 192, 193, 196.
38. Richard A. Gabriel and Paul L. Savage, Crisis in Command (New York, Hill & Wang, 1978), p. 92.
39. Lewy, p. 168.
40. Halberstam, The Best and the Brightest, p. 248.
41. Ibid., pp. 229, 678-679.
42. Ibid., p. 108. Yet some perceptive military views were also voiced. MG Graves B. Erskine, USMC (Ret.) did not hide his contempt for the French leaders in Vietnam during an official visit in 1950, but he pointed out to French Cabinet officials in Paris shortly after his visit that they needed to have a single individual in command. Shortly thereafter, the political and military heads were replaced and the remarkable, but unfortunately short-lived, General Jean DeLattre de Tassigny was given full command in Indochina. General Graves B. Erskine, USMC (Ret.), Oral History Transcript, History and Museums Division, Headquarters, US Marine Corps.
43. Kinnard, p. 88.
44. Ibid., p. 82.
45. Halberstam, Making of a Quagmire, p. 165, and Kinnard, p. 90.
46. Hoang Ngoc Lung, Colonel, ARVN, "The Intelligence Advisors," The US Advisor, Indochina Refugee Authored Monograph Program (McLean, Va., General Research Corporation, 1977), p. 78.
47. Kinnard, p. 90.
48. Ngo Quang Truong, LTG, ARVN, "The Tactical Advisor," The US Advisor, p. 74.

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49. Ibid, p. 73.
50. Ibid.
51. Ibid. General Harkins, however, pointed out that practically everything the French taught was based on defense. He claims that very little offense was taught. Harkins' letter of 29 August 1979 to BDM.
52. Kinnard highlights this problem when he quotes a general officer who felt that: "We erroneously tried to impose the American system on a people who didn't want it, couldn't handle it and may lose because they tried it."
53. MG Nguyen Duy Hinh, ARVN, "The Pacification Advisor," The U.S. Advisor, pp. 155-156.
54. Cao Van Vien, p. 193.
55. Kinnard, p. 91.
56. Cao Van Vien, pp. 31-32, 154-155, 193, Lewy, p. 168.
57. Kelly, p. 167.
58. Ibid., p. 8; Cao Van Vien, p. 42-43; and Kinnard, p. 91. General Harkins accused LTC John Paul Vann of having tried to assume command of ARVN units during the ill-fated 1963 battle at Ap Bac. Harkins letter to BDM.
59. Lewy, p. 168.
60. Collins, 129-130; Lewy, p. 169.
61. Halberstam, Making of a Quagmire, p. 165.
62. Kinnard, p. 90.
63. Halberstam, Making of a Quagmire, p. 165.
64. Kinnard, p. 92.
65. Collins, pp. 2 & 51.
66. Charles K. Nulsen, Jr., Colonel US Army, "Advising as a Prelude to Command," USAWC Research Element (Carlisle, Pa., US Army War College, Feb 1969), pp. 5, 10 & 16.
67. Cao Van Vien, pp. iii, and 198; Halberstam, Making of a Quagmire, p. 108; Kelly, p. 169.

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68. Gabriel and Savage, p. 97.
69. Halberstam, The Best and the Brightest, pp. 232, 248; Lewy, p. 169.
70. Kinnard, p. 165.
71. Congressman Paul N. McCloskey (R-Calif.) letter of March 17, 1975 to the Honorable James R. Schlesinger, Secretary of Defense.
72. John Paul Vann, Address to a group of educators at the University of Colorado, 1965. (Tape 2, Side 2)
73. Papers: John Paul Vann, "Harnessing the Revolution in South Vietnam," August 9, 1965; "Thoughts on GVN/VC Control," April 2, 1969; "Memo to Friends," April 12, 1972.

Lectures: John Paul Vann, University of Denver, October 5, 1965, June 7, 1966, November 27, 28, 1967; University of Kentucky, January 8, 1972.

Correspondence: Letter from John Paul Vann to Capt. Schratz, USN; to Dr. Vincent Davis, May 29, 1965, November 10, 1966, June 10, 1967, May 1, 1969, and May 10, 1972; to Sen. Edward Kennedy, April 11, 1968; to Mayor Sam Yorty, November 14, 1968; to Ambassador Robert Komer, June 4, 1971.

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New York Times, July 11, 1971.

Lexington Herald, January 11, 1972.

These sources were loaned to BDM by Dr. Vincent Davis, Director, Patterson School of Diplomacy, University of Kentucky, for purposes of this study.

CHAPTER 13  
PSYCHOLOGICAL OPERATIONS

No matter how successful we are militarily, until and unless we cause there to be a Government in Vietnam which can win the support of its own people, then we are not going to be successful.

John Paul Vann 1/  
7 June 1966

A. INTRODUCTION

Psychological operations in support of the Vietnam conflict grew slowly in response to the belated realization that the war was unlike any which the United States had previously fought. It was a war for political control and needed to be fought in a way that transcended the limitations of military operations.

The primary organization charged with the conduct of psychological operations (PSYOP) was the US Information Agency (USIA), established in 1953 as an independent government agency to "tell America's story abroad." Created by Reorganization Plan number 8, it evolved from the World War II Office of War Information (OWI). During the last year of the Korean War, the USIA, through its overseas operating branch, the United States Information Services (USIS), was assigned the mission of conducting psychological warfare activities, which established the precedent for USIS activities during the Vietnamese conflict.

Parallel to the USIS were the various PSYOP agencies of the military services. Each service had its separate organization, equipment, operating procedures and mission. An attempt at establishing some degree of uniformity in policy, techniques and goals was made in 1967 by assigning the development of PSYOP policy to the Joint United States Public Affairs Office (JUSPAO) with CORDS (Civil Operations and Rural Development Support) responsible for the civilian PSYOP effort and the Military Assistance Command Vietnam (MACV) responsible for military PSYOP.

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The hastily improvised effort to combine military and civilian PSYOP under one roof resulted in a structure that worked organizationally, in the sense that some of the earlier friction was reduced, but the civilian and military sides of the house had differing organizational concepts and differing missions, and the marriage of the two under JUSPAO was never a happy one. 2/ The military did not take PSYOP seriously as a primary weapon system, but believed, at best, that it was an occasionally useful supplementary weapon ("Come on out or we'll blow your heads off!"); but military commanders were not politically oriented or trained in the Vietnamese cultures. According to Reuben S. Nathan, "...military PSYOP aim[ed] at persuading people to accept what we consider our truth, to accept it passionately, so passionately as to fight for it." 3/ Granted, the Chieu Hoi program, a PSYOP campaign to urge the PLAF (VC) and PAVN (NVA) to defect, was very effective when combined with military pressure, but the conversion was not, apparently, a lasting one. USIS, on the other hand, attempted to operate remotely, through various news media, leaflet drops, etc., and remained committed to the concept that "objective information" is propaganda, refusing to accept the notion that "truth" is not objective but very much a matter of perspective. 4/ The USIS had only a remote understanding that the effective exercise of military power is a compelling and persuasive psychological tool, and the military failed to understand that PSYOP efforts, if limited to the battlefield or to a tactical objective, are incapable of achieving the ultimate strategic objective of willing conversion to a cause for which it is worthwhile to die.

### B. EARLY PSYOPS EFFORTS IN VIETNAM

#### 1. The French Effort

The French Commander in Chief had a "propaganda section" in his staff from 1946 to 1952, as did the French territorial commanders, to provide guidance and material support to the zone and sector intelligence affairs. A well-founded "Bureau of Psychological Warfare" was added to the CINC's staff in 1953, at which time psychological operations were stepped

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up significantly -- but not effectively. The belated effort was handicapped by lack of competent, trained personnel. A French sector commander of Ground Forces, South Vietnam described the need for specialists, "...modern ideological wars required personnel trained in political action and propaganda. Aside from questions of doctrine, there is a technique with which the greatest possible number of officers must be acquainted, and in which a certain number should specialize." 5/

### 2. Advising the Vietnamese

The first US efforts at PSYOP within Vietnam were uncoordinated and unplanned. They were conceived as solutions to immediate problems and not as reasoned, calculated campaigns.

While the battle for Dien Bien Phu was being fought, Colonel Edward G. Lansdale, USAF, was assigned to Vietnam as the CIA Chief on the staff of General "Iron Mike" O'Daniel, the new MAAG Indochina Commander. Experienced in guerrilla warfare after four years in the Philippines, Colonel Lansdale's task was to advise the G-5 (Psychological Warfare) staff division of the Vietnamese Army. In his cover assignment, he stepped into a void; all the other G-staffs had French advisors except for G-5, which the French saw as a minor enterprise.

Colonel Lansdale found the Vietnamese PSYOP organization far superior to that which he had encountered in the Philippines. The large headquarters staff included "three armed propaganda companies in the field, a staff of artists and writers, a radio unit broadcasting daily programs to the troops from the government radio station in Saigon, access to major printing facilities, and combat psywar equipment..." 6/ The assets were there, but Col. Lansdale found no real organizational apparatus directing G-5 efforts. Psychological warfare activities were confined to feeble attempts to induce the enemy to surrender while RVNAF troop morale was supposedly promoted by the broadcasting and publication of current events. No real efforts were being made to capture the revolution -- to establish the GVN as a nationalist force, a role which the communists had usurped. The Vietnamese Communists under Ho Chi Minh appeared to be the only force seeking independence from the French colonialists.



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The Vietnamese Army, already tainted by its association with the French, was arrogant in its dealings with the people. Soldiers stole food while on military operations, alienated the populace and made the communist's psychological warfare operations easier. To counter the self-defeating attitude of the RVNAF, Lansdale developed a school for military psywar training with a curriculum that "detailed ways to improve the relationships between the troops and the people."7/ Success was spotty. The school and its curriculum lacked support at the highest levels of command. More important, the Vietnamese soldiers were poorly paid and underfed, and they saw the populace as a source for augmenting their meager income, psychological warfare notwithstanding.

### C. THE UNITED STATES' APPROACH

#### 1. Policy and Organization

During the early 1960s, prior to the introduction of US ground combat forces in Vietnam, US PSYOP efforts were spread among three separate US agencies: the US Military Assistance Command, Vietnam (MACV); the United States Information Service (USIS); and the Agency for International Development (AID). Until May of 1965, these agencies operated almost independently.8/

The USIS concentrated its early activities on efforts which were largely defensive - advising the GVN on the development of its own apparatus for countering propaganda by the Viet Cong and the North Vietnamese. With the development of a pacification program to supplement military action, the range of PSYOP was broadened to include activities by:

- Military forces (tactical),
- Civilians in war areas (non-tactical),
- Economic - assistance programs by AID, and
- USIS operations which targeted the entire VN civilian population.9/

With at least four separate agencies involved, the PSYOP effort was uncoordinated and ineffective. This state of affairs was obvious in

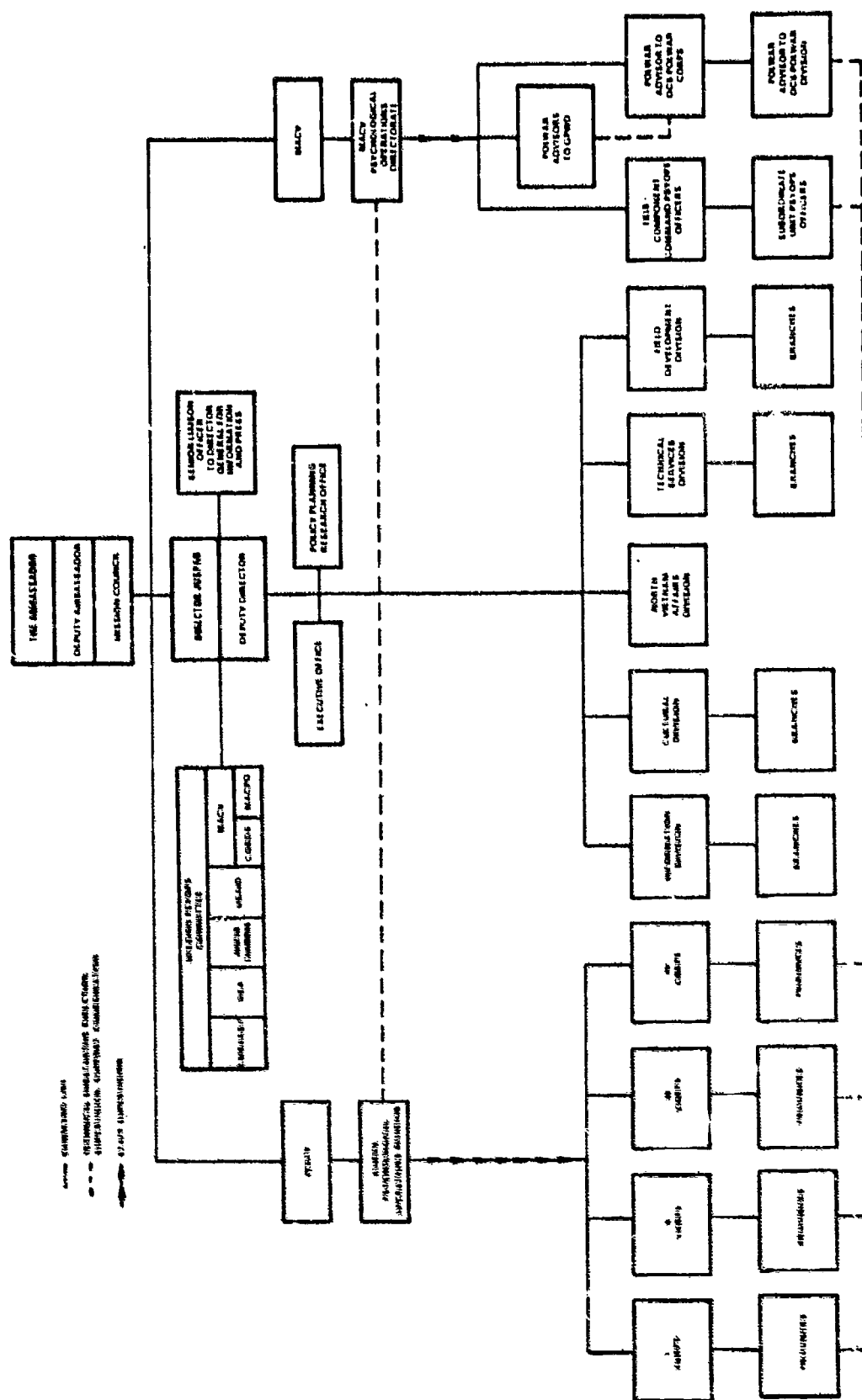
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1965 during a visit to Saigon by USIA Director Carl Rowan and Army Chief of Staff Harold K. Johnson who recommended to the National Security Council that information activities and PSYOP efforts be integrated. Accordingly, in 1965 President Johnson established the Joint United States Public Affairs Office (JUSPAO), headed by the USIS country public affairs officer.<sup>10/</sup> The office was created as a separate policy-making entity, "...complementing the military, economic and political. JUSPAO became one of the major elements of the total US mission, which also included the Embassy for political action, ...MACV for military action and the AID mission for economic action."<sup>11/</sup> Initially, JUSPAO was assigned operational and coordination activities until the establishment in 1967 of a new office under General Westmoreland, Civil Operations and Rural Development Support (CORDS), which became responsible for the entire pacification program. All non-tactical PSYOP activities of MACV were assigned to CORDS while JUSPAO retained responsibility for policy guidance. In this function, JUSPAO provided PSYOP policy guidance to the Psychological Operations Division of CORDS (CORDS/POD) and to the MACV Psychological Operations Directorate. Figure 13-1 displays the various command and coordination relationships involved. In 1968, the mission press center was removed from JUSPAO's jurisdiction <sup>12/</sup> and in 1969, PSYOP Coordinating Centers were established in the Corps Tactical Zones (CTZ). With those two exceptions, the essential PSYOP structure which prevailed throughout the war was as shown in Figure 13-1. JUSPAO received its PSYOP policy guidance from the Vietnam Coordinating Committee in Washington through the US Ambassador to Vietnam and the US mission PSYOP Committee.<sup>13/</sup>

JUSPAO, as a PSYOP policy-making entity, could not translate PSYOP policies into action. That was accomplished by other agencies shown in Table 13-1.

JUSPAO was assigned the following psychological objectives:

- Increase the Vietnamese people's participation with their government in the war against Communist subversion and aggression.



**SOURCE: J.W. Henderson, The United States Information Agency**

**Figure 13-1. US Mission Psychological Operations Structure**

TABLE 13-1. PSYOP RESPONSIBILITIES OF ELEMENTS IN VIETNAM

ELEMENT PMB & MISSION COUNCIL	RESPONSIBILITIES
US EMBASSY	THE AMBASSADOR WAS RESPONSIBLE TO IMPLEMENT THE FOREIGN POLICY OF THE UNITED STATES IN SOUTH VIETNAM. HE WAS THE SENIOR MEMBER OF THE MISSION COUNCIL, PRIMARY INSTRUMENT FOR INTEGRATING THE ACTIONS OF THE DIPLOMATIC MISSION.
MISSION PSYOP COMMITTEE	COMPOSED OF SENIOR OFFICERS FROM EACH AGENCY OF THE US MISSION: SERVED IN ADVISORY FUNCTIONS.
JUSPAO	RESPONSIBLE FOR US PSYOP POLICY, SUPERVISION, COORDINATION, AND EVALUATION OF ALL US PSYOP IN VIETNAM, AND FOR PSYOP SUPPORT OF RVN PROGRAMS.
MACV	CONDUCTED PSYOP IN SUPPORT OF (1) CIVIL OPERATIONS AND REVOLUTIONARY DEVELOPMENT AND (2) MILITARY OPERATIONS AGAINST THE ENEMY. EXERCISED OPCON OF THE 4TH PSYOP GROUP. MACV J3-11 DEALT WITH MILITARY PSYOP PROGRAMS AND PROVIDED ADVISORY ASSISTANCE TO THE VIETNAMESE GENERAL POLITICAL WARFARE DEPARTMENT (GPWD).
CORDS	RESPONSIBLE TO DEVELOP PACIFICATION PROGRAMS.
USARV	PROVIDED LOGISTICAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT TO US ARMY PSYOP UNITS
4th PSYOP GROUP	UNDER THE OPCON OF MACV BUT ASSIGNED TO USARV. CONDUCTED PSYOP IN SUPPORT OF JOINT AND COMBINED STABILITY OPERATIONS. FORCE COMMANDERS AND SENIOR ADVISORS EXERCISED OPCON OF PSYOP BATTALIONS ASSIGNED TO THE 4TH PSYOP GROUP.
7th PSYOP GROUP (OKINAWA)	PRINTING BACK-UP AND OTHER SUPPORT AND LIAISON WITH MACV
FORCE COMMANDERS/ SENIOR ADVISORS	RESPONSIBLE FOR PSYOP IN THEIR RESPECTIVE CTZ
NAVFORV	CONDUCTED PSYOP IN CONJUNCTION WITH INLAND OPERATIONS
7th US AIR FORCE	PROVIDED LEAFLET DISSEMINATION AND AERIAL BROADCAST SUPPORT
	SOURCE: DA PAMPHLET 525-7-1, APRIL 1976, P. 227

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- Increase the Vietnamese people's participation with their government in developing Vietnam's social and economic progress and its unity as a nation with the Free World community, including acquainting the Vietnamese with the American society.
- Increase other nations' sympathy and assistance to the cause of Vietnam.14/

Its action programs were concerned with six groups:

- GVN, particularly the Ministry of Information; the Chieu Hoi (Open Arms) amnesty program; and the Foreign Ministry.
- Vietnam communications media at the national level.
- Provincial targets, including some 600,000 refugees. (CORDS, with JUSPAO technical support, assisted the Information Ministry's provincial organization, the Vietnamese Information Service (VIS), in support of provincial psychological operations committees.)
- Viet Cong, reached by radio, leaflet drops, airborne loud-speakers, and informational teams, whose talks filtered back to the Viet Cong through relatives in GVN-secured areas. These programs placed particular emphasis on assisting the GVN Chieu Hoi program to encourage the Viet Cong to return to the free Vietnamese society. A tabloid newspaper was delivered to the Viet Cong in certain areas.
- North Vietnamese, by means of a GVN/US program of frequent and massive leaflet drops by both air forces, with leaflets warning of impending air strikes, describing the nature of the Hanoi regime, upholding GVN/Allied policies, and describing socio-economic progress in South Vietnam as compared with the North.
- The Free World, to which JUSPAO provided a constant flow of press, radio, publications, and motion picture materials."15/

At its peak in 1968, JUSPAO had a complement of 695 personnel and a budget of almost five million dollars. The 245 Americans, who included 116 military personnel, were assisted by 450 Vietnamese.16/

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From the foregoing, it would appear that the PSYOPS program in Vietnam should have been effective. The American genius for organization - the establishment of JUSPAO as the single PSYOP policy-making organization; a clear-cut delineation of effort with CORDS responsible for civilian PSYOP and MACV responsible for military PSYOP; the establishment of clear PSYOP objectives; adequate staffing and funding - should have created the administrative machinery for achieving every objective. Yet the PSYOP effort, although it achieved many tactical successes, must be adjudged a failure for a number of reasons, some relating to the establishment of the PSYOP program itself, some involving its execution, and some beyond the ability of anyone directly involved in the PSYOP programs to correct. The reasons for the successes and failures will be discussed at the end of the chapter in the section entitled "Lessons Learned".

### 2. Operating Activities

Within South Vietnam, the PSYOP policies established by JUSPAO were translated into action under two different organizations: the office for Civil Operations and Rural Development Support (CORDS) organized in 1967 and the MACV Psychological Operative Directorate under MACV J3 whose principal PSYOP arm was the 4th PSYOP group, also organized in 1967. CORDS conducted all of the non-tactical PSYOP of MACV, and the MACV PSYOP Directorate conducted military PSYOP. Both organizations acted in an advisory capacity by providing advice and assistance to the agencies of the Vietnamese government (CORDS) or to the Vietnamese Armed Forces (MACV PSYOP Directorate). MACV also conducted military PSYOP in conjunction with military operations, but inevitably its target audience overlapped that of CORDS. The 4th PSYOP group, commanded by USARV, was under the OPCON of the MACV PSYOP Directorate.

### 3. CORDS PSYOP

CORDS was established in May 1967 in order to permit the integration of civilian and military efforts at the province level. Since pacification programs were not possible without military security, CORDS was placed under the Military Assistance Command, commanded at that time by General Westmoreland. The importance of the office was underlined with the

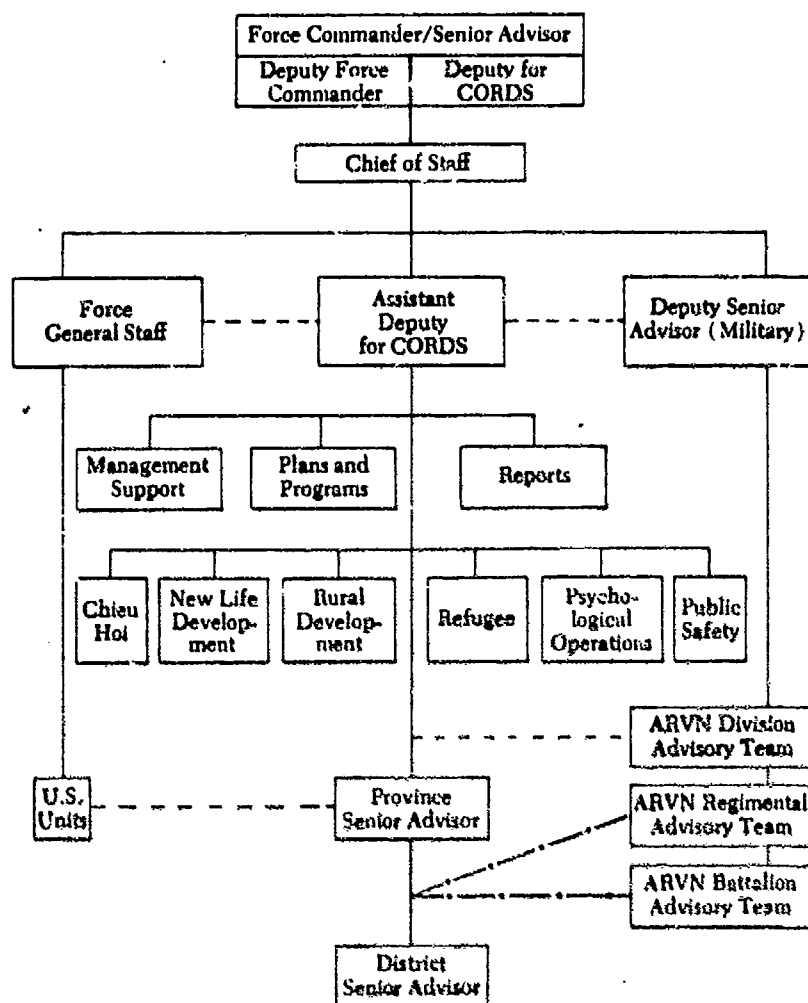
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appointment of Mr. Robert W. Komer, who was given ambassadorial rank, as deputy to General Westmoreland for CORDS. The actual organization itself was an anagram of the Office for Civil Operations and MAVCs Revolutionary Development Support Directorate which were merged to form the office of the Assistant Chief of Staff for CORDS. The CORDS field organization is shown at Figure 13-2. Once organized, the separate corps area and provincial representatives for military activities, AID and JUSPAO became unified under a single command chain. The corps commanders became CORDS regional representatives and former JUSPAO field personnel were assigned as assistant regional or provincial directors for psychological operations.<sup>17/</sup>

The primary CORDS PSYOP field activities were conducted by assistant province representatives who were a mixture of active duty army officers, AID employees, and State Department foreign service officers. They provided advice and assistance to the Vietnamese Information Service and supported the following activities:

- "Revolutionary Development," including the amnesty program, indoctrination of refugees, and police and special campaigns;
- Content, theme, design, printing, and distribution of leaflets and posters;
- A community television receiver program-including the selection of sites and placement of sets;
- Building information boards and supplying them with material;
- Establishment, stocking, and maintenance of reading-information rooms;
- Films and equipment for film showings in hamlets throughout the provinces; and
- Distribution of JUSPAO and Vietnam Information Service periodicals and books and the provincial newspaper.<sup>18/</sup>

Sometimes, of course, the activities of the province representatives went well beyond the above. For example, LTC Horner, USA, the province representative in Long An from August 1968 through August 1969, emplaced 150 bulletin boards and constructed 50 television sites; repaired and placed back into operation a province radio station operated by the Vietnamese Information Service; restored a province newspaper; launched



----- Co-ordination--Military and CORDS matters  
 ..... Operational Control when unit assigned an RD direct support mission

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SOURCE: Command and Control, p. 72

Figure 13-2. CORDS Field Organization, 1967



seven district newspapers (some of which were in operation until the fall of Long An province); and organized a culture drama-team of eight men and women who gave performances throughout the province consisting of traditional Vietnamese folk music, modern western music, and music and skits which stressed current propaganda themes. He persuaded VIS representatives to paint South Vietnamese flags on every dwelling in friendly hands as a visible symbol of loyalty; and he purchased and distributed 150,000 South Vietnamese flags. He equipped district VIS services with taping equipment and portable loudspeakers; established a central warehouse for distribution of propaganda materials; and encouraged frequent visits by district VIS representatives for the twin purposes of supplying them with PSYOP materials and consulting with them about current PSYOP themes. In May of 1968, he organized a centralized PSYOP center in Tan An, staffed by VIS and GVN army PSYWAR personnel, with local communications to the tactical operations centers of the Province Senior Advisor and the Second Brigade of the 9th Division, and distant communications to the CORDS/POD in Bien Hoa. The PSYOP center permitted rapid coordination of PSYOP activities in Long An and made possible a rapid reaction to any VC activity in the province. Within four hours after notification of a VC incident, a leaflet drop, specifically directed at that incident, could be airdropped in the nearby vicinity. The most effective activity, however, was concerned with the Chieu Hoi program. It became evident early in LTC Horner's tour, that PSYOP activities unsupported by military force were not measurably effective. He then began coordinating Chieu Hoi PSYOP efforts with the military activities of local US and Vietnamese units with the result that the VC defection rate in Long An in mid-1969 was the third highest of any province in the country. 19/

4. MACV PSYOP

MACV PSYOP, responsible for military psychological operations, was controlled by the Psychological Operations Division under the MACV J3. The primary operating arm was the 4th PSYOP Group, organized in December 1967 with headquarters in SAIGON and four battalions located as follows: the 7th at Danang (I-CTZ); the 8th at Nha Trang (II-CTZ); the 6th at Bien

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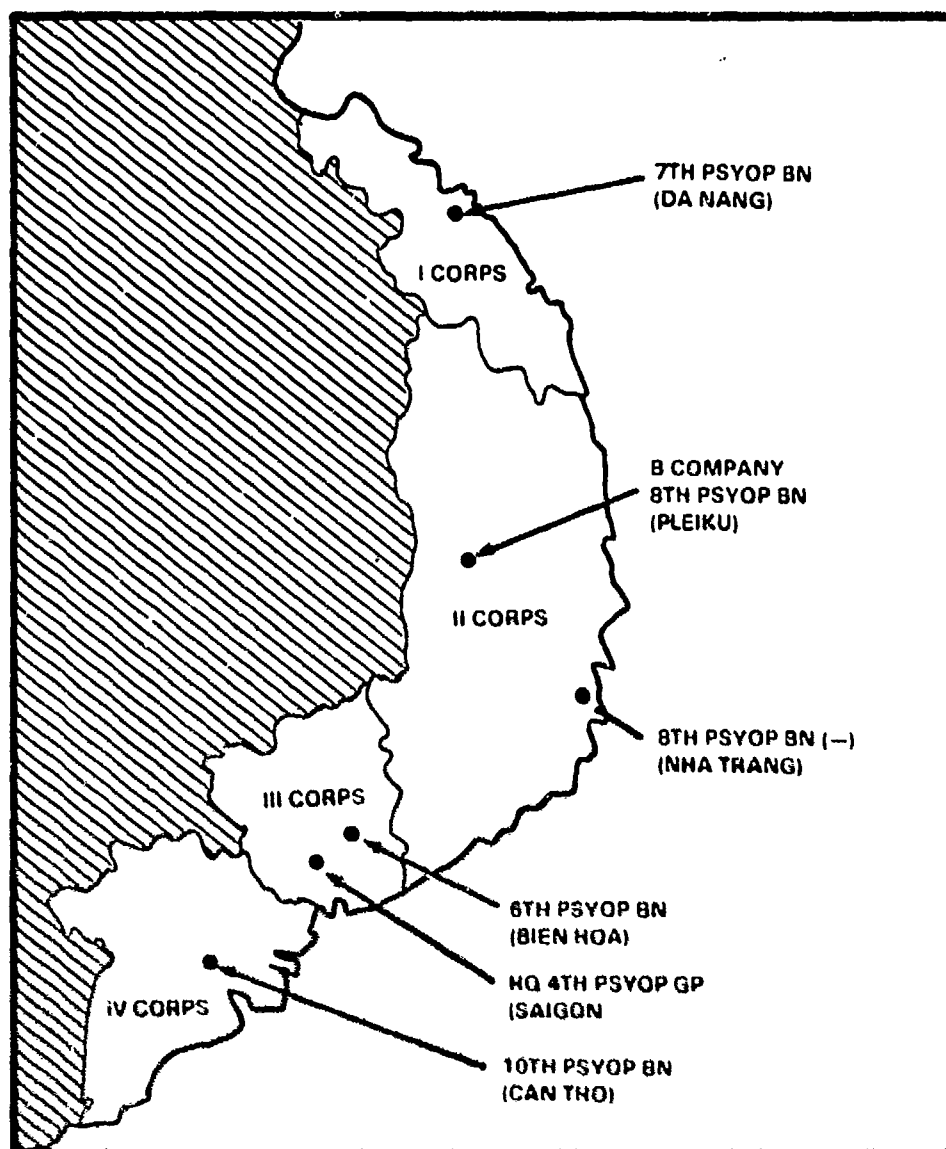
Hoa (III-CTZ);<sup>1</sup> and the 4th at Can Tho (IV-CTZ). (See Figure 13-3). As mentioned previously, the 4th PSYOP Group was commanded by USARV but was under the OPCON of MACV. In turn, each battalion was under the OPCON of the senior US force commander in each CTZ: 20/

The relationship of the 4th PSYOP Group to other PSYOP efforts is shown in Figure 13-4.

<u>Zone</u>		<u>Senior Force Commander</u>	<u>PSYOP Battalion</u>
I	CTZ	CG III US Marine Amphibious Force	7th PSYOP BN
II	CTZ	I US Army Field Force	8th PSYOP BN
III	CTZ	II US Army Field Force	6th PSYOP BN
IV	CTZ	Delta Military Assistance Command	10th PSYOP BN

The pattern of supervision of the battalions of the 4th PSYOP group varied markedly. In the III Marine Amphibious Force, a PSYOP general staff officer supervised the 7th PSYOP battalion for military PSYOP whereas in the II Field Force, that task was given to the G-5, but again his supervision was restricted to military PSYOP. In the I Field Force, staff supervision was exercised by a member of the CORDS staff, the Director for PSYOP and Chieu Hoi. In the Delta Military Assistance Command, the 10th PSYOP battalion was supervised by the CORDS PSYOP officer who had staff responsibilities for both the military and civilian PSYOP efforts. 21/

In its operations, the 4th PSYOP group went far beyond a combat support role. In addition to combat support, its primary mission, the Group encouraged the VC and North Vietnamese to defect or surrender; informed the civilian population about various government programs; and assisted in measures which contributed to the building of national unity.22/ The Commander of the 4th PSYOP Group, Colonel Taro Katigari, states that the Group should not normally have been involved in such programs since it would have been much more effective if the Vietnamese had



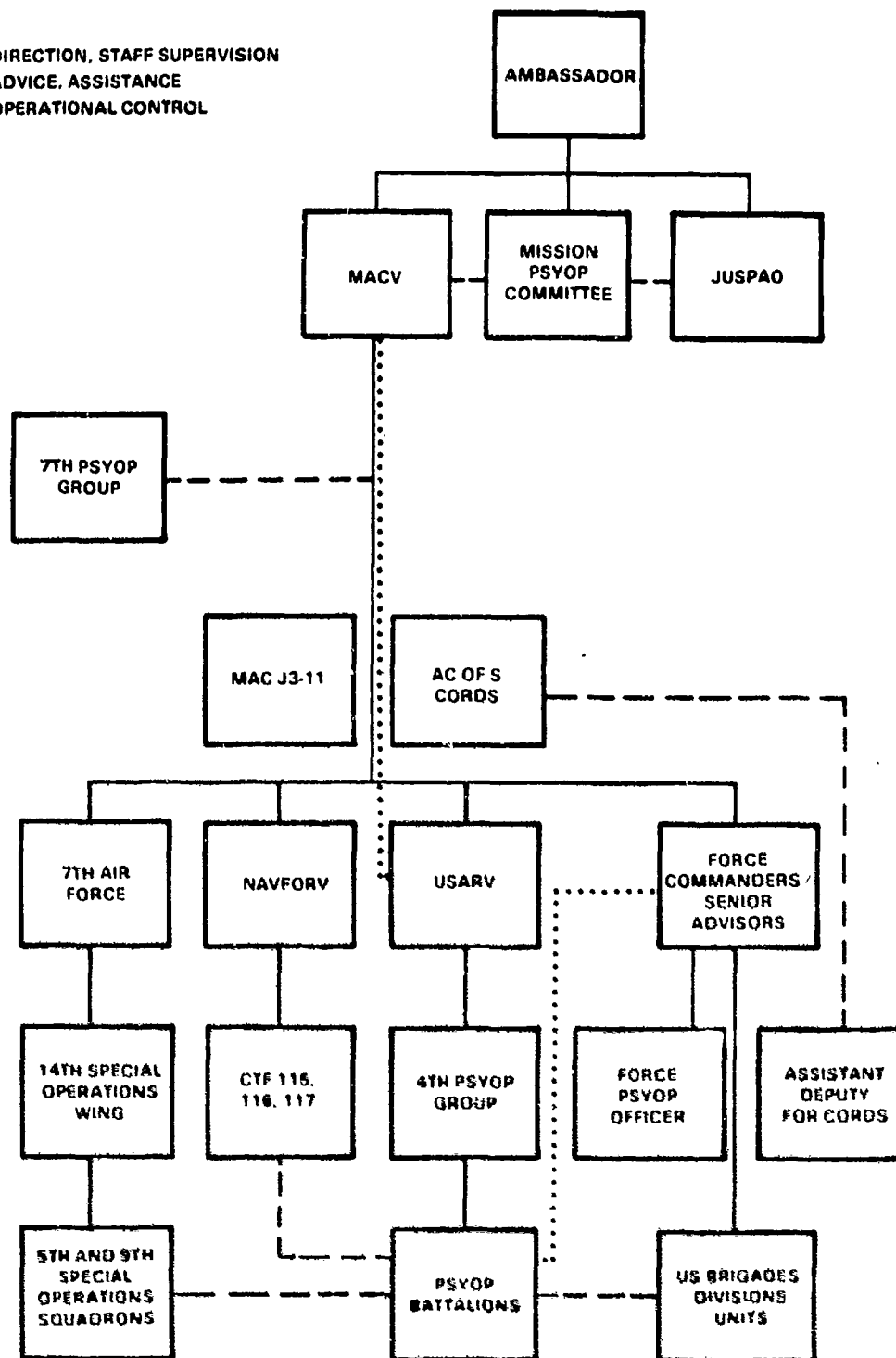
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SOURCE: DA Pamphlet 525-7-1, Vol. I, 1976, p. 221.

Figure 13-3. Locations of PSYOP Units (1967)

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— DIRECTION, STAFF SUPERVISION  
 --- ADVICE, ASSISTANCE  
 .... OPERATIONAL CONTROL



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SOURCE: DA Pamphlet 525-7-1, Vol. I, 1976, p. 222.

Figure 13-4. US PSYOP Mission in RVN

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themselves assumed such tasks. He felt that he had no choice, however, because of the absence of well-trained, well-equipped, and motivated Vietnamese PSYOP units.

To accomplish its mission, the 4th PSYOP Group had, in addition to assigned personnel, the following equipment:

"... a 50,000-watt radio station, operating out of Pleiku in the Central highlands; three high-speed, rotary printing presses; capability for researching and developing propaganda materials; and a staff to publish a magazine, called Thong Cam, for Vietnamese employees working for U.S. government military and civilian agencies. At the battalion level, the following was generally organic: six 1250 multilith printing presses; research and propaganda development capability; personnel to work with the US Air Force Special Operations units for aerial leaflet and loudspeaker missions; and ground loudspeaker and audiovisual teams. Battalion assets were generally located at the CTZ headquarters level with one exception: loudspeaker and audiovisual teams operated with US divisions and brigades or with province advisory teams.23/

In addition, the Group received production assistance from JUSPAO and back-up support from the 7th PSYOP Group in Okinawa for printing and high altitude leaflet dissemination.

### D. GVN PSYOP ACTIVITIES

The South Vietnamese government approached PSYOP activities somewhat differently from the United States because the GVN problem was not the same. The United States, despite a growing disenchantment with the war, could count on the loyalty of its own soldiers and government officials, and until the US withdrawal began, had few disciplinary problems. GVN, on the other hand, was trying to establish itself in a revolutionary situation. Not only were there "...deep-rooted, noncombat military problems involving loyalty and civil-military relations [but] also...the traditional problems of corruption, mutiny, motivation, desertion and troop and dependent welfare."24/ The GVN solution was to establish a political

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warfare (POLWAR) system, patterned after the Chinese Nationalists, which had as its key functions:

- Troop and dependent welfare;
- Indoctrination and motivation;
- Civil affairs;
- Psychological warfare (PSYWAR) activities; and
- Security investigations.25/

The target audiences were the GVN, enemy armed forces and civilians in friendly or uncontrolled areas.

The POLWAR system was established in October 1964. At the top was the General Political Warfare Department (GPWD), a major subdivision of the Vietnamese Joint General Staff, which directly commanded that part of the POLWAR cadre not directly assigned to military units and which provided staff supervision of the POLWAR cadre who were directly assigned. The GPWD included in its staff a Deputy for Civic Action and Enemy Action who was responsible for developing long-range civic and PSYWAR programs; a Deputy Chief for Regional Forces/Popular Forces who was responsible for developing POLWAR activities within those units; and a Plans Branch responsible for developing long-range POLWAR and PSYWAR plans. The operational elements included five POLWAR battalions (530 men) of five companies, each divided into eight teams with PSYWAR and civic affairs capabilities. Each battalion also had a culture/drama team. Battalions were under the OPCON of the corps tactical zone commanders.

Within the GVN military units, there were POLWAR personnel with POLWAR staffs in the corps, divisions, regiments and battalions. Each company executive officer functioned as the company POLWAR officer responsible for indoctrinating the troops, neutralizing prejudicial individuals, establishing proper relations between his unit and the civilian populace, and conducting PSYWAR activities against the enemy. He was assisted by an NCO and the POLWAR Fighter Organization consisting of a soldier from each squad.

Such pervasive organization certainly indicated an awareness on the part of the South Vietnamese of the importance of psychological warfare as

an internal persuasive device, as a means of making the government and its military arm acceptable to the people, and as a means of establishing desirable attitudes among the people themselves. Unfortunately, many of the POLWAR programs were empty rhetoric, and did not actually improve the conduct of the troops among the people, nor persuade the people that GVN would win the war.

E. VC PSYCHOLOGICAL OPERATIONS

1. NLF Social Organization as a Communications Device

The PSYOP of the National Liberation Front differed from those of the United States and Vietnamese governments as a Beethoven symphony from disco music. It was finely crafted, unified in concept, adaptable in its themes, and overwhelming in execution. Rather than an adjunct to a movement, the entire NLF social organization was a communications device. It was based on ". . . the fundamental assumption that if an idea would be rooted in the group it would become strong, durable, and infinitely more difficult to counter ..."26/ The "NLF created a communications structure far beyond any simple propaganda organization and plunged to depths far below mere surface acceptance of a message by an individual."27/ Douglas Pike described this social movement as a communications device which contributed the following to the NLF cause:28/

- It generated a sense of community, first, by developing a pattern of political thought and behavior appropriate to the social problems of the rural Vietnamese village in the midst of sharp social change and, second, by providing a basis for group action that allowed the individual villager to see that his own efforts could have meaning and effect.
- As an organizational armature, it mobilized the people, generating discontent where it did not exist, exacerbating and harnessing it where it did, and increasing especially at the village level the saliency of all the NLF appeals.

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- It altered to at least some degree the villagers' information input, perception of the world, attitude toward government, and daily actions in and out of the village. It changed underlying beliefs and even caused villagers to do things to their own disadvantage.
- In a self-reinforcing manner it fostered integration of the NLF belief system, turning heterogeneous attitudes into homogeneous ones; the social facilitation or interstimulation that resulted canalized and intensified village feelings, reactions, and aims. Thus even when the NLF organization turned coercive as it finally did, members continued to hold imported and alien values and norms.
- It greatly facilitated the NLF's efforts to polarize beliefs, stereotype anti-NLF forces, and generally shift villagers' attention in the directions chosen by the NLF leadership. As does any social organization, it caused the villager to rationalize more easily, being influenced by those around him. Since resistance to suggestion, that is, critical judgment, is lower within a group, it caused him to accept spurious arguments more easily and to succumb more quickly to emotional or personal appeals by the cadres and the village NLF leaders. Once critical judgment was impaired, the villager soon came to confuse desire with conviction.
- Once momentum in the group was developed, the group itself tended to restrict freedom of expression to the sentiments acceptable to the NLF-created group norms. The individual became submerged, the group became the unit, and great social pressure was brought to bear against the deviant, thus achieving the ultimate NLF objective--a self-regulating, self-perpetuating revolutionary force.
- Finally, because it helped cut social interaction and communication with the social system represented by the GVN, it isolated the villagers and heightened the sense of conflict between the two systems.29/

### 2. NLF PSYOPS Structure

The word "propaganda" does not mean the same thing in the communist world as it does in the Western world where it has connotations of something false, deceptive and misleading. In the communist world, propaganda is a part of a communications process designed to convey



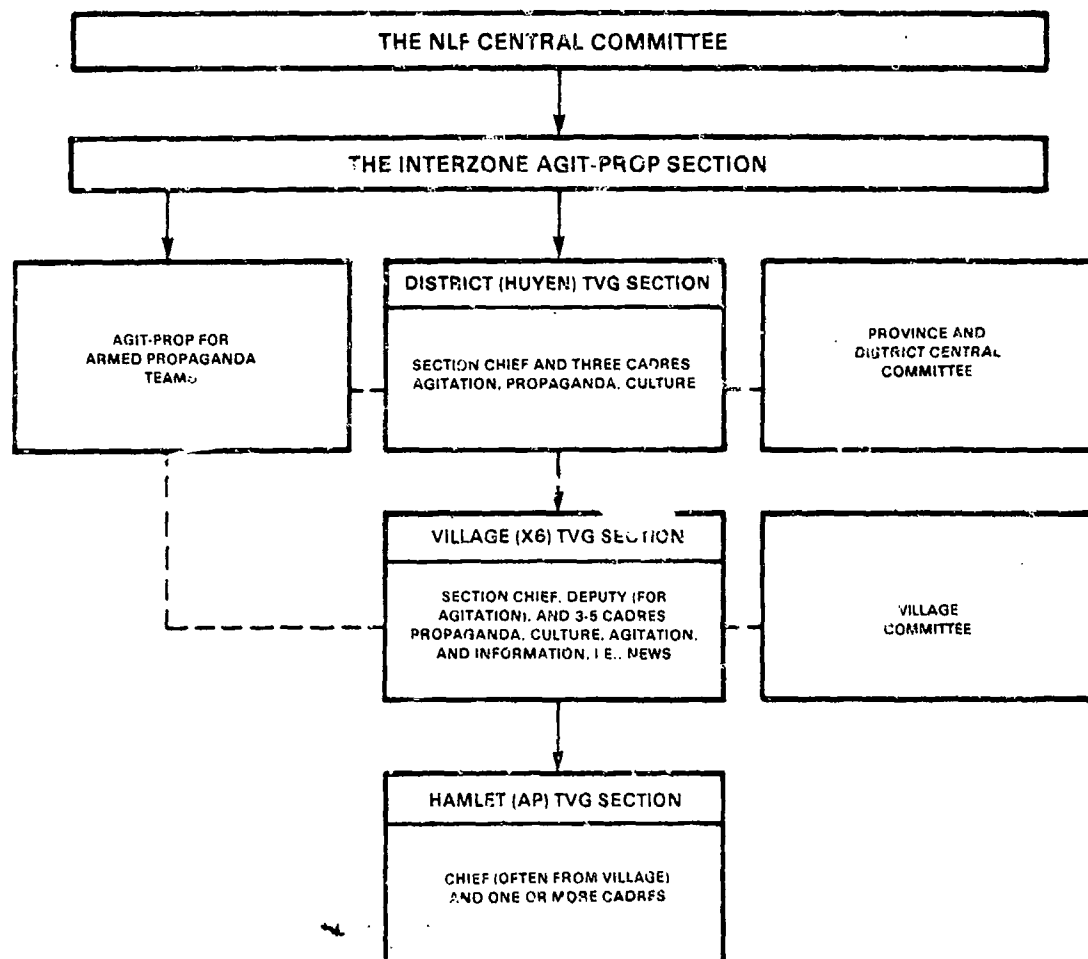
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whatever is desired. It has two separate aspects: agitation and propaganda, conceived in combination not as separate acts but as integral to the Revolution. In orthodox communist terms, agitation is the presentation of a few ideas to the masses whereas propaganda is the presentation of many ideas to a few persons. Propaganda is theoretical indoctrination of Party members to provide them with the scientific laws which govern society and is based on the elitist notion that the masses cannot understand Marxism-Leninism. In combination, " . . . agit-prop activities were conceived as a servo-mechanism by means of which the rural Vietnamese were indoctrinated with a certain set of values and beliefs as the necessary first step, the formation of the masses into an organizational weapon."30/

Thus, it is misleading to separate out PYSOP for discussion--misleading because it indicates that the NLF conceived of PYSOP as we did--something separate, apart from the main business at hand which was the achievement of military victory in the field. To the NLF, PSYOP (a term which they did not use) was not separate at all but part of the seamless web of revolution, the communication of ideas so powerful and so deeply felt that the target audience would fight and die for a cause which they believed was morally superior.

With that in mind, it is appropriate to examine the organizational techniques used by the NLF. First, there were a number of social organizations or social movements whose activities were managed by agitprop cadre. They were created " . . . specifically to transmit information, data, ideals, beliefs, and values" 31/ and by the very nature of their existence to require positive affirmative actions by their members. Some of these organizations included the Youth League, the Farmers' Liberation Association, the Women's Liberation Association, and the Youth Liberation Association. The Associations were guided by Agit-prop teams of three to five members.

The entire organization was controlled from the top by the NLF Central Committee operating through the Interzone Agit-Prop Section (see Figure 13-5). This section controlled, in turn, District, Village, and Hamlet sections. The Interzone Agit-Prop Section set communication



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SOURCE: Douglas Pike, Viet Cong, p. 133

Figure 13-5. Organization of the NLF Communication Structure

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policy, determined general themes, planned and launched campaigns, managed programs, and trained and assigned Agit-prop cadres.32/

The NLF(VC) communications tools themselves were divided into two broad categories, face-to-face instruments and mass media. Mass media, the primary instruments of the United States and the GVN, were considered by the NLF to be reinforcement tools only. They were not considered strong enough to convince the unconvinced. The NLF considered that face-to-face instruments were the only truly effective communications devices which could effectively persuade. Such devices included entertainment teams, armed propaganda team, and propaganda cadre.33/

### F. ANALYTICAL SUMMARY

In retrospect, it is easy to condemn the US and GVN PSYOP efforts as utter failures and to magnify the successes of the NLF. The government of North Vietnam is firmly entrenched in the South, and Vietnam is a unified, communist country. Yet it must be remembered that the GVN survived for two years after the total withdrawal of US forces and fell only to a military invasion from the North, not from internal uprisings. Even so, the demoralization of the RVNAF and the ease with which the Northern invasion force was able to subdue the South in its final invasion attest to the ultimate success of the total communist effort.

This is not to say that many valuable lessons cannot be derived from the American experience. Much was learned as a result of our massive effort, although the lessons may be difficult to apply within the context of a democratic society. Barry Zorthian, who was in Vietnam from 1964 to 1968, first as Director of USIS, then as Director of JUSPAO, has commented extensively on some of the PSYOP problems in Vietnam and the lessons learned. He has noted that part of the problem relates to basic American concepts of society and the US national experience in war. Americans believe in the separation of the military from a political role and of the civilian from a military role. US citizens believe in an open society with close public scrutiny of all government action. Finally, psychological

operations have not generally been viewed as an essential part of US strategic and tactical operations. Hence, Americans are almost primitive in the concept and execution of PSYOP.34/ In Vietnam, according to Zorthian:

We started with the most fundamental error of all: the identification of psychological operations as a separate dimension of war, as an add-on, if you will, to the military and economic and political policies under which the effort was conducted. The very first lesson we must learn is a rejection of any thought that the psychological dimension either exists in a vacuum or can stand on its own feet. In the fullest sense, and particularly in wars of insurgency, psychological operations must be considered as integral to every action and policy; must be woven into every move and decision; must be as natural and instinctive as the air we breathe. What else is the true meaning of Mao's famous aphorism about the fish and the ocean?35/

Some basic principles must be observed if psychological operations are to be successful. The first of these has nothing at all to do with psychological operations but relates to the government which is resisting insurgency. It is essential that it gain the support of its population. It must determine the needs of its people, determine what actions are necessary to fulfill those needs, determine what actions are necessary to gain the support of its people and then act accordingly. The role of the psychological operator is to support the government effort by communication, but the role goes far beyond that. It is axiomatic that a government faced with an insurgency situation is a government which has already lost touch with its people. It has failed to communicate with them or to develop programs to cope with their needs. If that government is to survive, it must respond to the legitimate needs of its people and "... must be prepared to carry through a necessary program of political, social, and economic change."36/ Having lost touch with its people, however, it is difficult for the government to discern what programs are necessary and what actions are desirable. Those recommendations must come from trained psychological operators, selected from the ranks of the people

themselves, who are allowed to participate to the fullest extent in the policy-making process. This was never done by the GVN. Programs were developed in Saigon or by the US government and were either not appropriate or were not followed through.

The first principle, then, is that the psychological operator must participate in the policy-making process. The second is that the communication of government policies and programs, the true function of the psychological operator, must be based on reality. Policies and programs cannot exist only on paper but must genuinely exist. If there is a gap, the bamboo telegraph will quickly reveal the discrepancy, and the credibility of the communications of the psychological operator will suffer. In Vietnam, for example, the gap between President Ngo Dinh Diem's promises and his actions was quickly discerned.37/

A third principle is that messages must be consistent regardless of the type of audience. This does not mean that the content should not be tailored to the audience. Obviously, a group of college professors in Saigon would require a more sophisticated communication than would a rice planter in Long An Province. But both messages should be internally consistent and should be based on factual reality.

A fourth is that an assisting power (the United States) can never substitute for a host government (GVN) in communications. A corollary is that the communicator must come from the ranks of the people themselves and not from the existing government bureaucracy. A second corollary is that the primary communications device must be face-to-face. According to Zorthian:

Some of our most nettlesome difficulties in actual operations in Vietnam grew out of our failure to observe this principle. The reasons were understandable. The difference in pace and concepts, in ethics and customs, in desire and capability, led Americans to conclude repeatedly--and perhaps rightfully--that the Vietnamese were not doing the job. As a result, proverbial American impatience led to the inevitable effort to do the job ourselves. The effort was doomed to failure before it started. Americans are having considerable trouble communicating with themselves, let alone with Asians in a completely alien setting.

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When we realized that we could not do the job for the Vietnamese, we finally devoted greater attention and resources to getting them to do the job themselves. And then again, we erred. We insisted that the task be done with our tools, through our techniques, and in our image. What emerged was something neither American nor Vietnamese, and it was often characterized by the worst of both. Certainly, there has to be effective communication, but it cannot be effective through surrogate channels; the host government must be the communicator with its own tools, through its own techniques, and in its own image. The assisting forces have their own message to communicate--the reason and nature of their contributions; and they can assist the host government with hardware and advice behind the scenes. But this is a subsidiary role at most, and there can be no diminution of the responsibility of the host government in communicating with its own people.38/

Three examples serve to illustrate this point. There is an old legend, known to all Chinese, about Confucius. A village was having difficulties--floods, disease, crop failures, and plagues. In desperation, the villagers asked Confucius to visit their village and advise them. He arrived, walked through the village, talked to the people, and then went to the village square where he sat facing to the east. There the story ends. The Chinese understand it completely, but the message is entirely lost to Americans.39/

A second example is a leaflet prepared by the NLF for use against the Americans. The leaflet reported: "Despite threat [sic] and repression, more than 100 GIs staged a rally and shouted 'Stop the war, bring all US troops home now.' They came to the airfield destroying houses, cars. The conflict took place [sic], 3 US officers were killed or wounded."40/ The point of the pamphlet was that such mutinies had taken place and should be emulated. Yet the bad grammar and awkward phraseology marked the leaflet as something alien, not quite believable.

A third example concerns a leaflet prepared by the 4th PSYOP Group. To exploit for the rural peasant the theme "VC destroys, GVN builds," two photographs were developed, one showing civilians wounded by the VC and one showing medical treatment for the victims in a GVN hospital.

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The leaflet would have appealed to the people in Saigon where such facilities actually existed but would have seemed inappropriate elsewhere. The photographs were not used.41/

As to the second corollary, that the primary and most effective form of communication is face-to-face, Zorthian has this to say:

There is almost a mathematical rule reducing the effectiveness of communication in direct proportion to the distance between the communicator and the audience. If it is face-to-face, it is most effective. If it is by nearby loudspeaker, it is next most effective. If it is via picture, whether in print or tube, this comes third. If it is cold print or disembodied radio, it is still less effective; and if any of these come from a great distance, then they become weaker by the mile. Particularly on subjects of direct involvement, the greatest discount is applied to messages from the foreigner via radio or leaflet drop when placed in direct competition with oral communication from an articulate and trusted neighbor. The impact or effectiveness of any message is even greater, of course, if it is supported by firsthand experience or physical evidence: hence the virtue of basing the message on reality.

So, starting with oral communication, we move backwards in a sense through the media to loudspeaker, picture, television, print, radio, and so on. Actually, there is little purpose in arguing the relative effectiveness of these media. The important considerations are relevancy, and intimacy with the audience.42/

Taro Katagiri, Commander of the 4th PSYOP Group from 1968-1970, verifies Zorthian's comment. In an essay concerning some of his experiences, he stated that psyoperators knew that face-to-face communications using Armed Propaganda Teams (APT) of ex Viet-Cong were the most effective support for the Chieu Hoi program. The problem was that the APTs were too few in number and the Allies were forced, instead, to support the Chieu Hoi program by leaflet drops. 43/

Zorthian's fifth principle is that "...the process of communication must be approached on the basis of functional integrity."44/ The task cannot be compartmentalized and the military, political and economic aspects of the communications effort cannot be separated or uncoordinated.

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The organization of JUSPAO was a major step in Vietnam in developing functional integrity for PSYOP. It effectively coordinated PSYOP policies and to some degree ensured a consistency of content. But JUSPAO was never the perfect instrument envisioned by its creators. Reuben S. Nathan had two tours in Vietnam, first as the director of the PSYOP staff of the newly organized JUSPAO, and the second as the author of a National Psychological Operations Plan for Vietnam. Nathan found that JUSPAO was "fractured by indifference, bureaucratic rivalry and differing conceptions of propaganda and policy." He found that the military establishment never took PSYOP very seriously and that its officers in the field believed that anyone, themselves included, could write leaflets. He found that military PSYOP aimed at persuading people to accept our truth. USIS on the other hand, according to Nathan, believed that "objective information" of itself was propaganda which led to factual reporting of developments whether such reports in wartime conditions made sense or not. The result was a serious policy conflict within the JUSPAO organization.<sup>45/</sup>

Nonetheless, JUSPAO was a great advance over the previous PSYOP anarchy which prevailed, and the organizational principles are worth considering in future counterquerrilla actions.

One further aspect of JUSPAO deserves comment. As noted, JUSPAO was a policy-making organization which received its guidance from the US mission PSYOP committee. JUSPAO, however, developed PSYOP policies only. It did not develop or recommend overall country policies and programs. It will be recalled that Mr. Zorthian's first principle is that the psyoperator must participate in the policy-making process. JUSPAO, however, was not the proper instrument to make policy since it was strictly a US organization with none of its bureaucracy drawn from the masses of the South Vietnamese people. Policies and programs should properly have been developed by GVN based on grass roots advice, and the primary communicators of the existence of such policies and programs should have been selected from among the South Vietnamese living in insurgent areas. JUSPAO, quite properly, coordinated the American effort, but the American effort, to be effective, had to be a derivative, not a primary effort. It could advise, exhort,



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teach, fund and equip the South Vietnamese who were conducting PSYOP, but it could not substitute for them.

### G. INSIGHTS

Much was learned as a result of the massive US PSYOP effort in RVN, but the lessons may be difficult to apply in a democratic society: Americans generally believe in separating military matters from politics, and they endorse an open society with close public scrutiny of all government actions. These mind sets create a difficult climate for PSYOP in contrast with the subtle and patient communist enemy in Indochina.

A government faced with a growing insurgency has already lost touch with its people; it has failed to communicate with them or to develop programs to satisfy their needs; if it is to survive, that government must respond to the legitimate needs of its people and make the necessary political, social, and economic changes while attenuating the hard-core opposition either psychologically or militarily.

PSYOP conducted by the US/GVN were more mechanical than psychological, being driven and measured by statistics, such as numbers of leaflets deployed and numbers of broadcasts made.

The GVN faced nearly insuperable odds in trying to conduct PSYOP effectively, having had the issues of nationalism and anticolonialism co-opted by the Viet Minh and then the DRV at the outset. From about 1960 to 1963 the steady erosion of the GVN's image made it difficult to employ PSYOP (while losing), and the series of chaotic changes in government after Diem's murder made it impossible to conduct a coordinated or coherent effort. BG S.L.A. Marshall commented on that period in these terms, "I judged that our psychological operations were, as usual, only a few degrees above zero."46/

US PSYOP efforts internationally were not successful either. The US failed to explain the US position in a sympathetic light or to unmask the enemy. It thereby failed to elicit the support of many allies and failed to blunt the criticism emanating from communist countries and the third world.

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US/GVN PSYOP failed to exploit the more prominent communist excesses such as occurred at Hue in 1968 or the slaughter of refugees in the 1972 Easter offensive, yet suffered PSYOP reverses at the hands of the US and international media over the 1968 Tet Offensive and My Lai.

The organization of JUSPAO was a major step in Vietnam in developing functional integrity for PSYOP, but it was fractured by indifference, bureaucratic rivalry and differing conceptions of propaganda and policy; the military establishment never took PSYOP very seriously and its officers in the field believed that anyone, themselves included, could write leaflets.

The American PSYOP effort, to be effective, had to be a derivative, not a primary effort; it could advise, exhort, teach, fund and equip the South Vietnamese who were conducting PSYOP, but it could not substitute for them.

### H. LESSONS

The indigenous government must develop policies and programs which reduce the grievances and meet the aspirations of its people. Such policies and programs should be recommended by psychological operators selected from the ranks of the people, not by government bureaucrats. The psyoperators who participate in the policy-making process must also participate in the communicating process.

The psychological operations message must be consistent and adhere to reality; the government policies and programs described must actually exist and must be vigorously pursued by the government.

An assisting power cannot substitute for the host government in communicating with its people.

The process of communicating must be undertaken on the basis of functional integrity.<sup>47/</sup>

To be fully effective, PSYOP must be conducted face-to-face by trained PSYOP personnel.

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The American way of war, which involves massive use of firepower, much of it unobserved, is often counterproductive with respect to PSYOP in a counterinsurgency environment. "The significance of the reliance on psychological warfare to replace firepower in a counterinsurgency is that it reduces the need for combat operations, thus minimizing the destruction of life and property which so often impacts upon the population. It is also much cheaper, a factor not to be ignored."48/

CHAPTER 13 ENDNOTES

1. John Paul Vann, former AID official and retired Army LTC, in an address to the School of International Studies, University of Denver, 7 June 1966. Mr. Vann's presentation was arranged by Dr. Vincent Davis of the university, who made a tape recording of that talk available to BDM for purposes of this study.
2. William E. Daugherty, "PSYOP in Perspective," original essay cited in DA Pamphlet 525-7-1, April 1976, pp. 84-85.
3. Reuben S. Nathan, "Making Policy is not the Propagandist's Business -or is it?", Original essay cited in DA Pamphlet 525-7-1, p. 130.
4. Ibid., p. 131. According to Phillip P. Katz in an original essay entitled "PSYOP and the Communication Theory", cited in DA Pamphlet 525-7-1, "... even the United States Information Agency (USIA) separates its activities into 'information' and 'cultural' programs, with the tendency to consider information programs from the viewpoint of the American journalist; to associate cultural programs with the objectivity of the US educator; and to view persuasion programs as a function of the propagandist or PSYOP. Of course, a PSYOP organization that follow a rigid distinction as to the functions of communication is at a distinct disadvantage competing with communication viewed as a political weapon and directed at the 'whole person,' skillfully combining the four functions of communications."
5. Commander S (not otherwise identified), commander of s/sector, F.T.S.V. (Ground Forces, South Vietnam), in Croizat, Col. V. J., USMC (Ret.) A Translation from The French: Lessons of the War in Indochina, Vol. 2. RM-5271-PR. Rand Corporation, 1967, p. 41.
6. Major General Edward G. Lansdale USAF, (Ret.) In the Midst of Wars (New York: Harper and Row, 1972), p. 137.
7. Ibid., p. 138.
8. DA Pamphlet 525-7-1, p. 225.
9. John W. Henderson, The United States Information Agency (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1969), pp. 243-244.
10. D.A. Pamphlet 525-7-1, p. 225.
11. Henderson, p. 244.
12. Ibid., p. 248.
13. Ibid., p. 250.

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14. Ibid., p. 250-251.
15. Ibid., p. 251.
16. Ibid., p. 248-249.
17. George S. Eckhardt, Command and Control, 1950-1969, Vietnam Studies, (Washington, D.C.: Department of the Army, 1974), pp. 69-70, 73.
18. Henderson, p. 254.
19. BDM Interview with LTC David D. Horner, USA (Ret.), assistant representative for PSYOPS, Long An Province, August 1968 to July 1969. A series of interviews during October 1979.
20. Colonel Taro Katagiri, USA (Ret.), "The 4th PSYOP Group: Organization, Operations, and Observations," original essay cited in DA Pamphlet 525-7-1, Vol. I, April 1976, p. 220.
21. Ibid., p. 221-222.
22. Ibid., p. 223. Looking at the program from the enemy's side, an assessment of US PSYOP activities was provided by an NVA reconnaissance platoon leader who was captured by a LRP Team of the US 4th Infantry Division near Ban Me Thuot in August 1968:

I have heard of the Chieu Hoi program but I don't know what it is. I heard a little about it from an airplane but we really didn't pay much attention as it was very poor propaganda and the voice did not sound sincere.

I have seen lots of the psyops leaflets but they are very poor and we laugh at them, they make no impression on the soldier of the NVA. I saw them in Kontum and Darlac provinces as we moved toward our objectives. The quality of the writing is very poor and not good Vietnamese. The Americans should let the Vietnamese write them as they know how to put the story or what you want said into poetry, the Vietnamese are a very poetic people. I know and all the men in my unit knew the lines of a poem used by the SVN and we thought of it often. The best way to tell of good will is by a poem. The SVN poem that we remember is for our mother.

2 LT Nguyen Van Thong, Platoon Leader, Recon Co., 320th Regt, 1st NVA Division. A monograph written by Major Billy J. Biberstein, Commanding Officer, 13th Military History Detachment from interviews with Lt. Thong, interrogation reports, I FFORCEV G2 Daily INTSUMS, and the paper "A day in the life of an NVA soldier in South Vietnam," prepared by the I FFORCEV G-2 Section, p. 14.

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23. Katagiri, p. 223.
24. Monte R. Bullard, "Political Warfare in Vietnam," original essay cited in DA Pamphlet 525-7-1, p. 461.
25. Ibid., p. 461.
26. Ibid., p. 463-465.
27. Douglas Pike, Viet Cong, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The M.I.T. Press, 1966), p. 124.
28. Ibid.
29. Ibid., pp. 240-125.
30. Ibid., p. 121.
31. Ibid., p. 126. Philip Katz in an original essay entitled "PSYOP and Communication Theory," cited in DA Pamphlet 525-7-1, agrees with Pike. He states:  
"To the National Liberation Front (NLF) in Vietnam, for example, social institutions such as schools and membership associations are as important as the mass media in the total PSYOP effort. Especially at the tactical level the agitprop cadres of the NLF keenly understand the multipurpose function of communication."
32. Pike, p. 33.
33. Psychological Team, R&A Branch, CICV, p. 17. This document is undated and the place of publication is unknown. It is on file at BDM.
34. Barry Zorthian, "The Use of Psychological Operations," Lessons of Vietnam, American-Asian Educational Exchange, published in collaboration with the Institute of Far Eastern Studies (South Orange, New Jersey: Seton Hall University, 1971), pp. 41-42.
35. Ibid., pp. 42-43.
36. Barry Zorthian, "Where Do We Go From Here," Foreign Service Journal, February 1970, p. 19.
37. Zorthian, "The Use of Psychological Operations," p. 45.
38. Ibid., pp. 46-47.
39. If harmony is restored in all aspects of human endeavor, the problems of the village will disappear.

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40. Martin F. Henry, "Lessons from VC/NVA propaganda," original essay cited in DA Pamphlet 525-7-1, p. 403. An alternate view of the effectiveness of leaflets is contained in Volume I of the final Technical Report of a study for the Advanced Research Projects Agency (ARPA) entitled Psychological Operations Studies--Vietnam, 25 May 1971, by Drs. Ernest F. and Edith Bairdain. They conclude that psyops leaflets used in Vietnam were generally effective and that psyops conditioning coupled with battle stress encouraged defectors.
41. Taro Katagiri, "A Former PSYOP Group Commander in Vietnam Looks Back," original essay cited in DA Pamphlet 525-7-1, p. 139.
42. Zorthian, "The Use of Psychological Operations", pp. 55-56.
43. Taro Katagiri, "A Former PSYOP Group Commander in Vietnam Looks Back," p. 141.
44. Zorthian, "The Use of Psychological Operations," p. 47.
45. Nathan, DA Pamphlet 525-7-1, p. 131.
46. BG S. L. A. Marshall, "Thoughts on Vietnam" in W. Scott Thompson and Donaldson D. Frizzell, Ed., The Lessons of Vietnam (NY: Crane, Russak & Co., 1977), p. 52.
47. Barry Zorthian, "The Use of Psychological Operations in Combatting Wars of National Liberation," paper presented to the National Strategy Information Center Conference, March 1971, p. 1. Lessons 1 thru 5 were quoted in part.
43. Douglas S. Blaufarb, The Counterinsurgency Era: US Doctrine and Performance (NY: The Free Press, 1977), p. 74.

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## CHAPTER 14 CIVIL AFFAIRS

Military civic action performed directly by the United States would seem to be a questionable counterinsurgency tool, except as a means to improve relationships with the surrounding population where American armed forces are committed in combat. On the other hand, it has some prima facie merit when the objective is to train and equip the armed forces of a threatened regime to perform needful public services. 1/

Douglas S. Blaufarb  
The Counterinsurgency Era,  
1977

It is almost touching to read in a MACV report on civic action during 1967 that U.S. and other allied forces in one year had distributed 572,121 cakes of soap, conducted personal hygiene classes for 212,372 people, provided 69,652 haircuts and bathed 7,555 children. Yet the expenditure of so much goodwill and massive resources did not translate into the genuinely voluntary involvement of the people on the side of their legitimate government. 2/

Guenther Lewy  
America in Vietnam, 1978

### A. INTRODUCTION

American forces were involved in civil affairs on a massive scale in World War II. Civil affairs units performed essential tasks in the wake of US and allied forces in Africa, Italy, France, and Germany as well as on various Pacific islands and eventually in Japan. The magnitude of this effort eclipsed all other American civil affairs activities -- before or since. Yet, civil affairs operations in Vietnam assumed unique importance and have left us faced with the question, "Did the US succeed in civil affairs in RVN, or did it fail?"

US civil affairs experience in Europe and Japan differed markedly from that in Vietnam. Those areas had enjoyed viable governments and the people were used to being governed by their own leaders. They had political traditions and large pools of educated and talented people. They were



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conquerors permitted; equally important -- they were capable of doing so. Those nations faced externally-supported communist threats within their borders, but, to date at least, they have successfully fended off or neutralized the internal threats. Unlike Vietnam, they have not, since WWII, experienced major armed attacks from outside their borders.

Civil affairs (CA) in Vietnam was a new experience for Americans. To begin with, not enough trained US civil affairs personnel were available; most of the people with CA experience had left the service or were in the Reserve Component. Few, if any, spoke fluent Vietnamese and not many spoke French. The Government of South Vietnam (GVN) was new and inexperienced. Trained leaders were rare, since the French colonialists had provided virtually no opportunity for middle or high-level leadership to develop. Honest leaders were even more rare. The insurgent threat surfaced dangerously in the late fifties. In 1964, regular PAVN (NVA) forces started to infiltrate via the Ho Chi Minh Trail from North Vietnam, the precursor of other major forces to follow, which ultimately became a multi-corps invasion. Under those circumstances, the US civil affairs effort faced insuperable odds.

The timing of the civil affairs effort, the assets allocated to it, and its priority within the US grand strategy for Vietnam are major factors to consider in the assessment of the impact that civil affairs actions had on the war. Despite the continued presence of US civil affairs advisors after the withdrawal of US military forces from the Republic of Vietnam in 1973, the unwillingness of the US to employ any military power against the invading DRV forces in 1975, and the denial of material support to the GVN spelled the collapse of the Republic and its armed forces. One wonders whether a continued US military presence of moderate size, like that which has remained in South Korea since 1953, might have deterred what finally came about.

This chapter focuses solely on civil affairs: its concepts and structure, the policies of US armed Forces in Vietnam with respect to civil affairs, and an assessment of its effectiveness. The larger aspects of US involvement in Pacification/Vietnamization (which were in part civil

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affairs efforts) are covered in detail in Chapter 5, Volume V, and the US Advisory Effort is addressed in Chapter 12 of Volume VI.

### B. STRATEGY FOR THE CONDUCT OF THE WAR

The US objective in RVN was the establishment of an environment in which the fledgling government of South Vietnam could survive in spite of overt attacks by North Vietnamese armed forces and subversion by the Viet Cong infrastructure. It was a war dominated by concern for civil affairs objectives, i.e., people-related goals.

The US objective was aptly expressed by CINCPAC and COMUSMACV in the prologue to their 30 June 1968 joint report on the war in Vietnam:

Our basic objective in South Vietnam has been to establish a safe environment within which the people of South Vietnam could form a government that was independent, stable, and freely elected--one that would deserve and receive popular support. Such a government could not be created in an environment dominated by Communist terrorism. The Viet Cong and the North Vietnamese Army occupied large parts of the country and subjected large areas to armed attacks and acts of terrorism and assassination. These acts were most often directed at the representatives of government in provinces, villages, and hamlets throughout the countryside, the government officials most closely associated with the people.

The United States' military goal was to provide a secure environment in which the citizens could live and in which all levels of legal government could function without enemy exploitation, pressure, or violence.<sup>3/</sup>

### C. A DEFINITION OF TERMS AND REVIEW OF EARLY CAPABILITIES 4/

The thrust of US military civil affairs activity in South Vietnam before the commitment of American combat forces in 1965 was mainly that of advising the RVNAF on its military civic action programs. The purpose of

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those short-term, high-impact programs was to help the people throughout the RVN attain social and economic development in such fields as:

- education - by constructing schools;
- military training - to enhance local security;
- transportation and communications - by building roads and installing community communications equipment; and
- health and sanitation - by building hospitals and dispensaries and drilling water wells.

Moreover, those early military civic action programs were structured to help improve the standing of the RVNAF with the people, particularly the rural population.

After the introduction of US combat forces, American emphasis shifted as military commanders became concerned with those phases of civil affairs activities which embraced all of their relationships with GVN civil authorities as well as the people of RVN. Throughout, US military advisors continued to help RVNAF units with their military civic action endeavors, while American combat elements embarked on US-initiated civic action programs such as the USMC Combined Action Platoons and the MACV MILCAP in an effort to help the GVN win over the Vietnamese people.

It was not until the formation of Civil Operations and Revolutionary Development Support (CORDS) under the direct command and control of COMUSMACV, with the explicit goal of winning the "other war" -- pacification -- that US civil affairs and military civic action programs, among others, were integrated into a single operating entity under a single manager.<sup>5/</sup>

The difference between military civil affairs and military civic action is a very fine one indeed. Both, from the American point of view, involved certain well-established and finite relationships between the US/FWMAF military and GVN/RVNAF officials. Civil affairs involved the US military in certain activities or projects which normally would have been carried out by the South Vietnamese military and/or government, while civic action involved those projects performed by the RVNAF (with US advisors) for the betterment of the civilian populace in general. The simplest

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definition would be to say that one is a subset of the other, as is described below. Figure 14-1 depicts graphically that subtle difference.

### 1. Civil Affairs Categories

As a command responsibility, civil affairs is concerned with the totality of relationships between military forces, the civilian population, and the civil authorities of a country where military forces are present.<sup>6/</sup>

Civil affairs actions are not easily accomplished in a coordinated fashion in the best of environments. In the difficult situation in Vietnam, careful orchestration of a multitude of diverse instruments was required. Civil affairs covers twenty-one specific areas ranging from government through food to religion (see Appendix A), which in turn are subdivided into many tasks.

These twenty-one segments of society/government may be grouped under seven broad categories:

- civil support of (military) operations;
- support of, or exercise of, government functions;
- community relations;
- consolidation of psychological operations;
- civic action (includes also support of indigenous civic action);
- population and resource control; and
- military support of civil defense.<sup>7/</sup>

In Vietnam, the approaches to civil affairs varied in the beginning from small military attempts to protect the government and conduct civic actions, to the multi-faceted pacification program launched in May 1967 by CORDS (Civil Operations and Revolutionary Development Support), which encompassed all seven categories.

### 2. Military Civic Action

Civic action, one of the seven categories of civil affairs, is frequently the most visible. An example of early US military civic action in Vietnam was the work of US Navy Construction Battalion (Sea Bee) teams and US Army Engineer detachments using hydroject well drillings to provide water for Vietnamese hamlets.<sup>8/</sup>

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US ASSUMES COMPLETE EXECUTIVE, LEGISLA- TIVE, JUDICIAL AUTHORITY.	DEGREE OF AUTHORITY BETWEEN US AND INDI- GENOUS GOVERNMENT IS NEGOTIATED.	US HAS NO AUTHORITY VIS-A-VIS CIVILIAN GOVERNMENT OR PEOPLE. US PERSONNEL SERVE IN ADVISORY CAPACITY ONLY.
MILITARY GOVERNMENT (CIVIL AFFAIRS)	CIVIL AFFAIRS	CIVIC ACTION

SOURCE: The Role of Civil Affairs in Marine Corps Operations, M. Dean Havron and Randolph C. Berkeley, Jr., (McLean VA: Human Sciences Research, 1966).

Figure 14-1. Civil Affairs/Civic Action as an Authority Spectrum

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From those small beginnings, civic action increased constantly and became a major expression of both US and Vietnamese impetus in civil affairs, to demonstrate the interest of both the GVN and USG in the welfare of the people. Appendix B describes civic action activities in Vietnam to mid-1968.

### 3. Pacification and Vietnamization

As indicated above, there are twenty-one civil affairs areas of concern. In Vietnam two new terms were used to describe essentially civil affairs activities. These were Pacification and Vietnamization. Both had the objective of strengthening the government and its armed forces as well as gaining the allegiance of the people.

This chapter addresses the civil affairs concept, but Volume VI Chapter 13 on Psychological Operations and Volume V Chapter 5 on Pacification and Vietnamization provide the details of those operations and relate the principal aspects of civil affairs. In the Second Indochina War, the French colonialist term of Pacification became the most descriptive and all-inclusive label for what later became US civil affairs and civic action efforts. Between the French use of the term and the start of the American CORDS program in 1967, the history is replete with many abortive civil affairs/civic action efforts such as Agrovilles, Strategic Hamlets, Hop Tac, and Revolutionary Development. Concerning those efforts, Ambassador Komer, the first Deputy COMUSMACV for CORDS, pointed out that:

While each had promise they were in reality only small scale efforts compared with the conventional war effort. Furthermore, they all suffered from a lack of adequate local security support as the GVN and US military regarded them as essentially civilian business. For these and other reasons, pacification and other counterinsurgency programs remained a small tail to a large conventional military dog, at least till late in the day.<sup>9/</sup>

Eventually, all civil affairs and civic action activities came under the pacification umbrella and were administered by the Deputy COMUSMACV for CORDS.

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### 4. Army Civil Affairs Capabilities

The US Army, which had a wealth of civil affairs experience from World War II, recognized its importance by designating a general officer as the G-5 (Civil Affairs) of the Army Staff. Before the conflict in Vietnam, however, that billet was changed to a colonel in the G-3 section. An excellent civil affairs school was conducted at Fort Gordon, but most of the Army personnel involved in that training belonged to Reserve component units that were not called up during the Vietnam War. That was an unfortunate situation, as the civil affairs problems of South Vietnam were manifold. Aside from holding off the North Vietnamese invader and attacking the Viet Cong infrastructure, two formidable tasks, the US's principal mission in RVN was to nurture a viable South Vietnamese government.

Because the US Army's extensive experience with civil affairs in Japan and Europe was not directly transferable to Vietnam, US authorities turned to those who had recent experience in counterinsurgency situations such as in Malaya, Greece, and the Philippines. In Europe, after WWII, the Army civil affairs units had followed the battles and taken over the liberated territories. Few of those areas contained well-organized guerrillas, as in South Vietnam, along with continuing conventional military operations.

In 1966 the US Army had two civil affairs groups, five civil affairs companies and two civil affairs detachments on active duty.<sup>10/</sup> The US Marines have experienced a great variety of civil affairs situations, notably during the banana wars in Latin America, but the Corps normally relies on the US Army to provide civil affairs support. In Vietnam, the Army's 29th Civil Affairs Company was attached to the Third Marine Amphibious Force in June 1966.

### D. EARLY CIVIL AFFAIRS ACTIVITIES (BEFORE CORDS)

In 1964, officials in the United States Mission had recognized the importance of civil affairs programs for winning the support of the people and began emphasizing the need for expanding the provision of US advice and

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assistance to the Vietnamese on civil matters. Programs to improve local civic and community activities were expanded. US advice and assistance ranged from large-scale projects such as dam construction, crop development, bridge-building and road improvements to the digging of wells, planning and supervising elementary sanitation systems, the establishment of small businesses, the construction of Montagnard hospitals and the technical training of medical orderlies, dental technicians and automotive mechanics.<sup>11/</sup>

Medical assistance was generally found to be the most productive of all the civic action programs. By the Spring of 1964, over 1.5 million people had been helped by the US Army Special Forces in medical programs. Special Forces medical men and their Vietnamese assistants treated wounds, fractures, sores and infections, gave immunizations and pills for many diseases and illnesses, pulled teeth and delivered babies. They also supervised and helped in the building of village dispensaries. In terms of winning the trust and support of the people, the medical programs were considered to be by far the most successful.<sup>12/</sup>

US Army Special Forces in cooperation with US civilian agencies also conducted a wide range of nonmedical civic actions such as:

- distributing relief supplies to refugees (food, clothing, blankets, cooking utensils, soap and toothbrushes furnished by US Operations Mission (USOM), CARE, religious groups and families of Special Forces troops);
- building and repairing schools, dispensaries, playgrounds, market places, pagodas, latrines, orphanages and leprosariums;
- digging wells, clearing land, carrying out irrigation and drainage projects;
- constructing and repairing roads, bridges and culverts;
- distributing tools, fertilizer and seed;
- working for rodent and insect control;
- improving the grade of chickens and pigs with breeding stock;
- building ponds and stocking them with fish;



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- distributing school books, pencils, notebooks, blackboards and chalk;
- conducting English classes; and
- establishing cooperative stores where local produce and hand-crafts could be sold and manufactured articles purchased.13/

1. The Marines' Combined Action Experiment: Winning The Hamlet War

In 1965, shortly after US combat forces had arrived in RVN, the US Marines began to move out of their initial enclaves of Da Nang and Phu Bai in aggressive pursuit of the VC. The Marines found that their "rear" areas were being exposed and that the VC were moving into them immediately after the US units moved out. Marine unit commanders had assumed that the ARVN would move into areas that their men had swept and cleared, but such was not the case. The VC would quickly regain control of supposedly cleared areas and then conduct hit-and-run attacks against the support and logistical tail of the Marine combat force.

Those circumstances forced the Marine high command to rethink its basic strategy in combatting the VC. Military victories such as Operation Starlite in July 1965 could be won against VC main force units, but they contributed little or nothing to the ultimate objective of pacification. Lt. General Victor H. Krulak, CG Fleet Marine Force Pacific, and Lt. General Lewis W. Walt, CG III Marine Amphibious Force (MAF), did not agree fully with General Westmoreland's search-and-destroy strategy for defeating the VC. While paying lip service to the CONUSMACV's search-and-destroy approach, they pursued what they believed to be a more viable way of defeating the enemy--military civic action.14/

To implement their military civic action program, the Marines first created Tactical Areas of Responsibility (TAOR) which encompassed the five northern provinces of the I Corps Tactical Zone. Theoretically, the responsibility of each area and the welfare of the people in it was to be shared between the Marine unit in command and the corresponding ARVN unit which occupied the same area. Unfortunately the ARVN was slow to accept its role in such a US-inspired arrangement; therefore, the Marines carried

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the whole load on their shoulders. This provided a very interesting contrast: early on, Marine commanders were being asked to assume responsibility for large populated areas while US Army units in the South were busy searching-out and engaging enemy main force units and leaving the battle for the people's "hearts and minds" to someone else.

Subordinate Marine commanders seized upon the idea of military civic action to prosecute the struggle for pacification of the Vietnamese countryside. Every battalion in the III MAF was charged with the implementation of a military civic action program, and as a result, the last half of 1965 saw the development of combined action operations, the beginnings of which are described below:

By August 1965 civic action was well underway in the the Marine TAORs, but the miraculous transformation of the hearts and minds into support of the GVN had not occurred. In the Phu Bai TAOR the Vietcong were regularly mortaring and harassing the Marine airstrip and base areas from the shelter of adjacent hamlets, hamlets that had been "cleared" several months before. Bars of soap and pink pills for the Vietnamese had won support for neither the Marines nor the GVN. Armed patrols into these hamlets were greeted as though they were a lynch mob. At this point, the Marines looked into their history, adapted what they found there, and the first Combined Action Company (CAC) was born. 15/

Local PF (Popular Forces) were recruited to supplement regular Marine personnel. They acted effectively as guides and trackers and they proved to be an excellent source of intelligence on insurgent activities. Marine Lieutenant Paul Ek first integrated PF soldiers into his platoon as the Marines had done during some of the "banana wars" in South and Central America and in American Samoa during WWII. After splitting his platoon into three squads and reinforcing each with PF soldiers, Lt. Ek placed each of the reinforced squads into three separate hamlets north of the Phu Bai airfield. Their efforts were a success. The Marine's person-to-person or one on one approach instead of a large impersonal group rendered good results. 16/

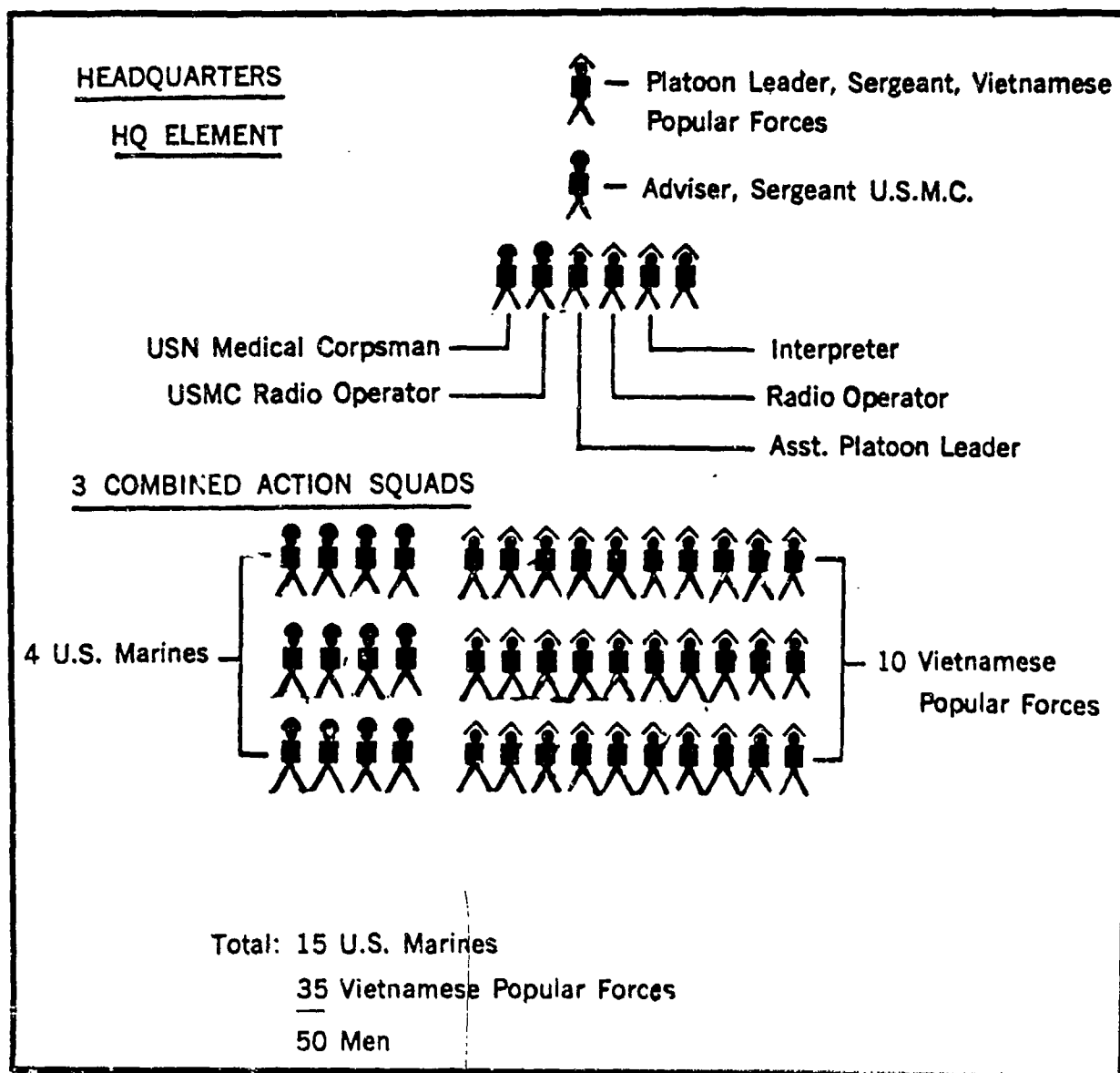
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Based on those early limited successes, the Marine Corps hierarchy gave combined action official sanction. Notwithstanding the resistance which both the GVN and MACV supposedly had to the Marine's initiative, Marine commanders willingly assigned men to the combined action program (at the expense of cutting into their overall combat forces).<sup>17/</sup> By the spring of 1966 there were 40 combined action companies (CACs) in I Corps. The units initially received no support from the GVN. Marine commanders, recognizing the strategy's potential, continued to provide personnel for the CACs at the expense of their combat strength. In January 1967, 49 CAC were surviving on their own resources and defending themselves against VC units that were four or five times their size. The CACs were an effective auxiliary rear-area defense force, but they had not assumed the main responsibility of pacification.<sup>18/</sup>

In February of 1967 the CAC was renamed the Combined Action Platoon (CAP). Figure 14-2 shows the CAP organizational structure. The tasks of the CAPs were the same as those of Popular Force platoons:

- Destroy the Vietcong infrastructure within the village or hamlet area of responsibility;
- Protect public security and help maintain law and order;
- Protect bases and communication axes within the villages and hamlets;
- Organize people's intelligence nets; and
- Participate in civic action and conduct propaganda against the Viet Cong.<sup>19/</sup>

The CAPs provided 24-hour military security to the hamlets, which effectively denied the VC access to potential recruits living in the hamlets. The VC were also dependent on food and supplies which they purchased, extorted or stole from the hamlets. The CAPs denied the VC access to food and supplies by observing the marketing and distribution centers. The platoons provided protection from VC attacks. Only after building up the confidence of the villagers through these measures did the CAPs enlist intelligence from hamlet citizens. This was done by adoption of the hamlet children by the Marines and by a generally low-key humaneness in dealing



4541/78W

SOURCE: Adapted from DA Vietnam Studies, The War in the Northern Provinces 1966-1968

Figure 14-2. US Marine and Popular Forces Combined Action Platoon Organization

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with the hamlet population.20/ Civic action efforts were not initiated until the credibility of the security efforts had been clearly demonstrated to the people. Once the ability to fight and defeat the VC had been observed, Marines, popular forces and peasants worked together on such projects as school construction, irrigation works, bridge and road repairs, animal husbandry, introduction of new crops and agricultural techniques, formation of cooperatives and institution of credit unions.21/

The Marines working with the PFs were successful in winning peasant support. Some of the reasons for their success were:

- The number of Marines (and the Navy corpsman) was small enough not to be an abrasive factor in the life of the hamlet. In essence they were a well-mannered minority which posed no threat to the existing social order, nor did they provoke a xenophobic reaction.
- The tactical integrity and firepower of a Marine squad, even though it is dispersed among the PF platoon, is sufficiently strong to convince the peasants of the credibility of its military competence to provide military security.
- The rank, age, and attitudes of the Marines in a CAP are such that it is possible for the peasants and the PFs to identify with the Marines as individuals.22/

Another factor which contributed to the success of CAP was that the Marine hierarchy completely supported it. The Marines involved with CAP believed in what they were doing, demonstrated by the fact that three out of four in the program extended their tours in Vietnam one or more times.23/

In summary, the US Marine leadership felt strongly that military civic action -- dealing directly with the Vietnamese people -- was the strategic key to winning the insurgency in Vietnam.24/ On the other hand, COMUSMACV, in the person of General Westmoreland, did not support that view completely.25/ Westmoreland's view, one supported by the majority of other US military and civilian pacification leaders at that time, was that external forces cannot successfully work directly with the people without having

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the GVN involved as an intermediary 26/ Notwithstanding the short-run success of the Marine I Corps pacification efforts in improving security and material conditions in the countryside, it would appear that they failed in their long-term objective -- national solidarity.27/ Even if the CAP succeeded in denying popular support to the VC, it failed to help win the political support necessary for the GVN to survive as a viable political entity.

### 2. Other Military Efforts

In January of 1966, General Weyand reported that in the Han Nghia Province, 25th US Infantry Division civic action teams, assisting local government and religious leaders, had reached more than 50,000 people in villages and hamlets through contributions of food, clothing, educational materials, tools and sanitary measures. Another 40,000 had been treated by combined US/ARVN medical civic action teams. Over a thousand construction projects had been completed including schools, playgrounds, fortifications, roads and bridges.28/ Other units also made positive contributions to civic action, which were the precursors to the MILCAP Program.

### 3. MILCAP

The Military Civil Action Program (MILCAP) involved the participation of US/FWMAF/RVNAF forces in economic and social development programs. One of the most important activities of MILCAP was the monetary indemnification to Vietnamese civilians for injury, death or property damage suffered as a result of combat operations by Allied Forces. Figure 14-3 shows the progress made by MILCAP in 1967. MILCAP came under Civil Operations and Revolutionary Development Support (CORDS) administration when CORDS was established in May of 1967.

### E. CORDS - THE MARRIAGE OF CIVIL OPERATIONS WITH REVOLUTIONARY DEVELOPMENT

The large-scale commitment of US combat forces in 1965, together with the appearance of regular NVA units in the South, enlarged the purely military aspects of the war and diverted attention and resources from pacification and civil affairs operations. American firepower had stabilized the

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1)	Schools				
	Constructed by US/FWMAF	341	Repaired	302	
	Joint w/RVNAF	433	Repaired	306	
2)	Dispensaries				
	Constructed by US/FWMAF	141	Repaired	306	
	Joint w/RVNAF	152	Repaired	83	
3)	Hospitals				
	Constructed by US/FWMAF	25	Repaired	64	
	Joint w/RVNAF	26	Repaired	22	
4)	Bridges				
	Constructed by US/FWMAF	413	Repaired	436	
	Joint w/RVNAF	370	Repaired	77	
5)	Wells				
	Constructed by US/FWMAF	387	Repaired	218	
	Joint w/RVNAF	389	Repaired	36	

SOURCE: MACV Command History, 1967, Volume II.

Figure 14-3. Civic Action Accomplishments of US/FWMAF/RVNAF in 1967

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situation somewhat by 1966, but the efforts of the GVN at weakening the political and military position of the VC, and expanding its own control over the population, were disappointing. Not only had the conventional war diverted resources from pacification and civil affairs operations, but also US advice and support for the GVN pacification effort was poorly organized.<sup>29/</sup>

Because pacification presented the GVN with the dual task of developing the countryside politically and economically while protecting the rural population from the VC, US support for pacification was provided by US civilian as well as military agencies. Yet the Department of State and USAID (the agency specifically charged with coordinating and helping to finance US economic aid and assistance to RVN) had neither the authority nor the ability to assist the South Vietnamese in combating VC terrorism. On the other hand, the US military did not have a mandate to foster political development or economic growth.<sup>30/</sup>

President Johnson repeatedly stressed that US non-military activities in Vietnam were essential to US aims.<sup>31/</sup> Fearing that the pacification effort might be neglected during the troop buildup, he urged the US Mission in Saigon to emphasize non-military programs and to give them increasing priority. The President believed that progress in pacification was as essential as military progress and, at the Honolulu Conference of February 1966, stressed his desire for an improved pacification program. One month after the meetings in Hawaii, LBJ appointed Robert Komer as his Special Assistant for Vietnam Pacification Coordination in Washington to direct, coordinate and supervise non-military programs -- further evidence of the priority which the President gave to the "other war." National Security Action Memorandum 343 established the special office in the White House for coordinating and energizing civilian efforts in Vietnam. The President said:

In my view, it is essential to designate a specific focal point for the direction, co-ordination and supervision in Washington of U.S. non-military programs relating to Vietnam. I have accordingly designated Mr. Robert W. Komer as Special Assistant to me for carrying



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out this responsibility. I have charged him... to assure that adequate plans are prepared and co-ordinated covering all aspects of such programs, and that they are promptly and effectively carried out. The responsibility will include the mobilization of U.S. military resources in support of such programs.32/

President Johnson had good reason to express his concern with the progress of Pacification. Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara and others had visited Vietnam and returned convinced that the effort was going badly.

Secretary McNamara described the problem in these terms in 1966:

Success in pacification depends on the interrelated functions of providing physical security, destroying the VC apparatus, motivating the people to cooperate, and establishing responsive local government. An obviously necessary but not sufficient requirement for success of the RD cadre and police is vigorously conducted and adequately prolonged clearing operations by military troops who will "stay" in the area, who behave themselves decently and who show respect for the people.33/

Mr. McNamara's report suggests that he had a depth of understanding about the many complexities of pacification/civil affairs which few others possessed at the time. After enumerating a number of remedies he concluded:

The most difficult to implement is perhaps the most important one--enlivening the pacification program. The odds are less than even for this task, if only because we have failed so consistently since 1961 to make a dent in the problem. But because the 1967 trend of pacification will, I believe, be the main talisman or ultimate US success or failure in Vietnam, extraordinary imagination and effort should go into changing the stripes of the problem.34/

Mr. Komer became the most articulate and influential advocate of pacification in RVN, and was the prime mover of the reorganization of US advice and support for pacification and civil affairs. He believed that the main task of improving security, weakening the Viet Cong and winning

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the support of the people could be furthered by consolidating American assistance under a single manager empowered to eliminate overlapping programs and disentangle competition for resources.

Poor results and unsuccessful interim organization shake-ups finally induced President Johnson completely to reorganize American support for the pacification and civil affairs. In May 1967, taking into account both Komer's recommendations and the military success in Vietnam against the enemy's forces, Johnson gave General Westmoreland responsibility for both the civil and military aspects of pacification. He appointed Komer as Westmoreland's deputy for pacification, heading a new pacification support organization designated Civil Operations and Rural Development Support (CORDS). CORDS integrated the duties and personnel of military and civilian agencies at all levels, so neither was dominant: for example, Komer, although subordinate to Westmoreland, had a general officer as his deputy.<sup>35/</sup>

CORDS, as an advisory and support organization, was developed to help the GVN establish a firm hold in contested territory and win the confidence of the rural population. Members of CORDS at all levels helped formulate pacification plans on a nationwide basis. CORDS had a larger staff and more funds for pacification than the US government had previously made available. Moreover, by emphasizing pacification as an integral part of the US war effort, it showed just how important pacification was to the Americans -- thus exerting greater influence over the South Vietnamese than earlier fragmented programs.<sup>36/</sup>

Armed with the needed support, Mr. Komer did not delay in putting his new powers and resources to use. First, he concentrated on providing continuous security for the hamlets and depriving the VC of their rural base. He sought CORDS involvement and responsibility for the following:

- support, advice and training of the RVNAF's paramilitary auxiliaries, the RF/PF;
- positive inclusion of the RVNAF into civilian pacification efforts;

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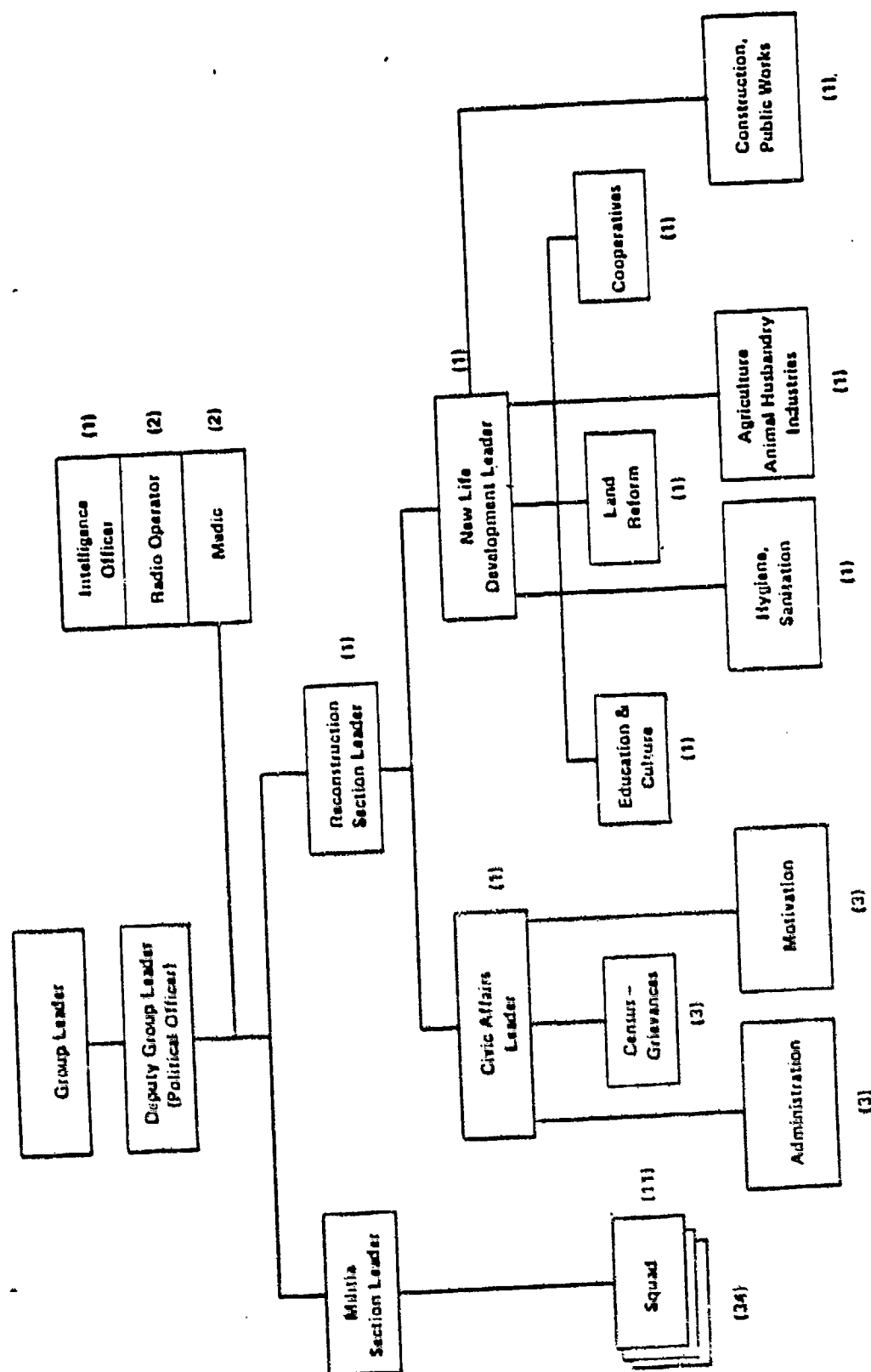
- exploitation of the growing volume of intelligence on the VC and concentration on the VC village cadre infrastructure;
- converting the nominal priority of pacification in RVN into an actual priority;
- generating rural support for the GVN and its programs; and
- positioning American pacification advisers so as to exert effective leverage on GVN officials (when required).

Several problems faced CORDS at its beginning, some of them were:

- no GVN/RVNAF counterpart agency to the US-inspired solution to a Vietnamese problem;37/
- no counterpart organization to CORDS functioned in Washington, D.C.; and
- the ad hoc nature of the CORDS solution, which by presidential fiat usurped the authority and resources allocated by the Congress to the separate agencies involved.38/

Perhaps it is best to describe the CORDS effort in terms of its components or stages, which were:

- sustained territorial security (local clear and hold) whose cutting edge was the 59-man RD, Cadre Team (an armed paramilitary force to provide protection as well as civic action and developmental help to the hamlets). See Figure 14-4 for a RD team organization chart. Also relevant was the allocation of 40 to 50 ARVN battalions to provide temporary security in selected RD campaign areas until the (long neglected) RF and PF forces could be re-equipped and upgraded.
- revitalized Chieu Hoi program aimed at inducing VC to rally to the GVN and then integrating them into and employing them productively in the South Vietnamese society.
- systemization of previously feeble GVN efforts to identify and round up clandestine VC cadre composing the politico-military administrative, terror, propaganda, recruiting, and logistic apparatus. The Phung Hoang (Phoenix) program of going after the VC infrastructure was resurrected.



SOURCE: Indochina Refugee Authored Monographs, Pacification p. 52

Figure 14-4. Organization, 59-Man Revolutionary Development Cadre Group

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- revival of political support for the GVN and its leaders;
- revival of a modestly functioning rural administration through training programs and technical assistance;
- revival of the rural economic system by providing pragmatic incentives to the farmer; and
- establishing essential rural services, such as medical, educational, refugee care and handling and civil police protection and support.<sup>39/</sup>

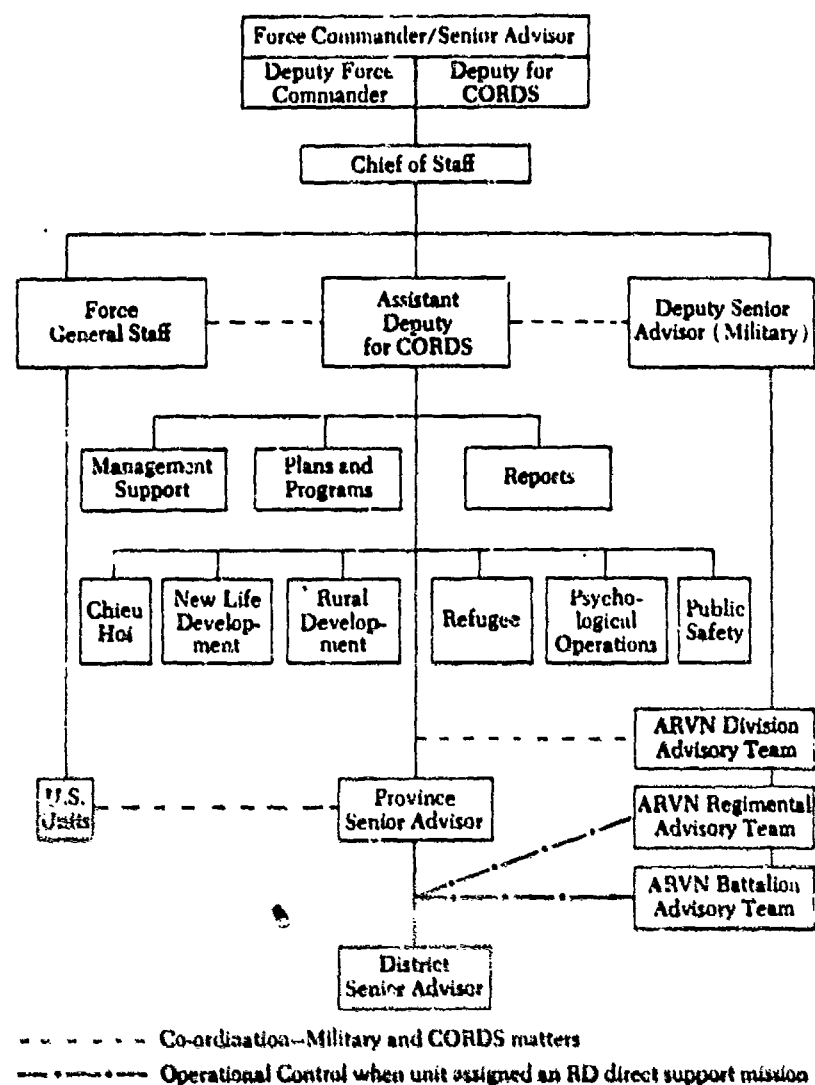
In spite of considerable effort, the reorganized pacification program achieved no sustained success until late in 1968. Although the program failed to take off as quickly as its officials hoped, its financial and personnel aspects were considerably enlarged in this early period. Funds for pacification almost doubled between 1966 and 1968, and the numbers of para-military forces, police, and Revolutionary Development cadres all increased (for a complete breakout of how CORDS was organized and its relationships with the GVN see Figures 14-4 through 14-10).<sup>40/</sup>

As soon as a firm foundation for pacification and civil affairs had been established, the VC/PAVN set the program back by launching their Tet offensive against the cities of RVN in 1968. With targets ranging from the US embassy in Saigon to the citadel at Hue, the VC/PAVN forces assaulted 36 of the 44 South Vietnamese provincial capitals and five of the country's six autonomous cities. Creating new refugee problems and forcing the redeployment of security forces, the Tet offensive forced funds and personnel to be diverted from pacification and civil affairs to rebuilding efforts in urban areas. The net result was a drop in rural security when RVNAF forces supporting pacification and technical cadres working in civic action had to be withdrawn from the countryside.

Following the brief pacification reversal throughout early 1968, the US-GVN launched a short-term counteroffensive designated the Accelerated Pacification Campaign (APC). The APC, an intensive three-month effort started in November 1968, set the following specific goals for each element of pacification and civil affairs:

- intensification of the Phoenix program;
- concentration on the problem of the resettlement of refugees;

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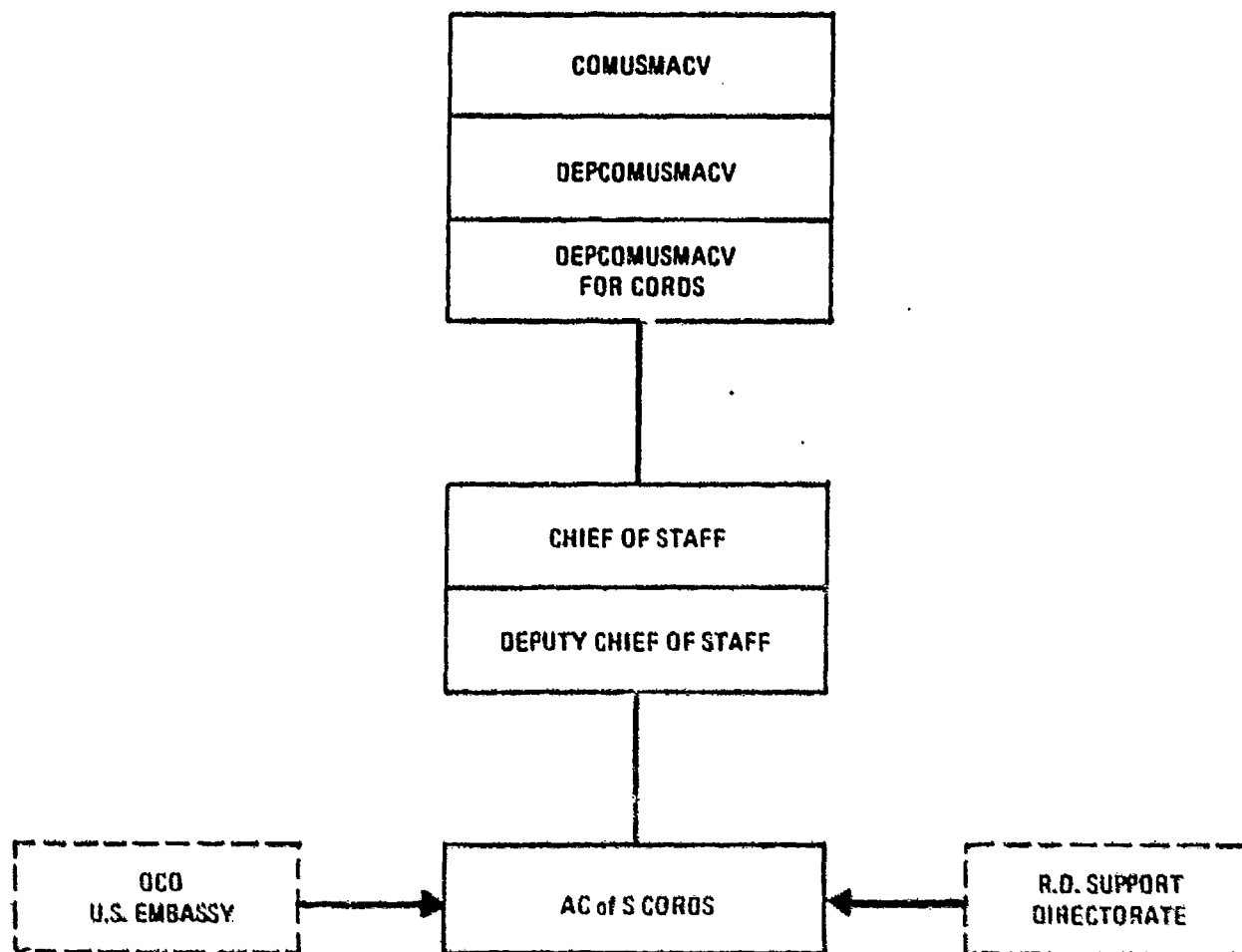


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SOURCE: MG George Eckhardt, Command and Control, 1950-1969, p.72

Figure 14-5. CORDS Field Organization, 1967

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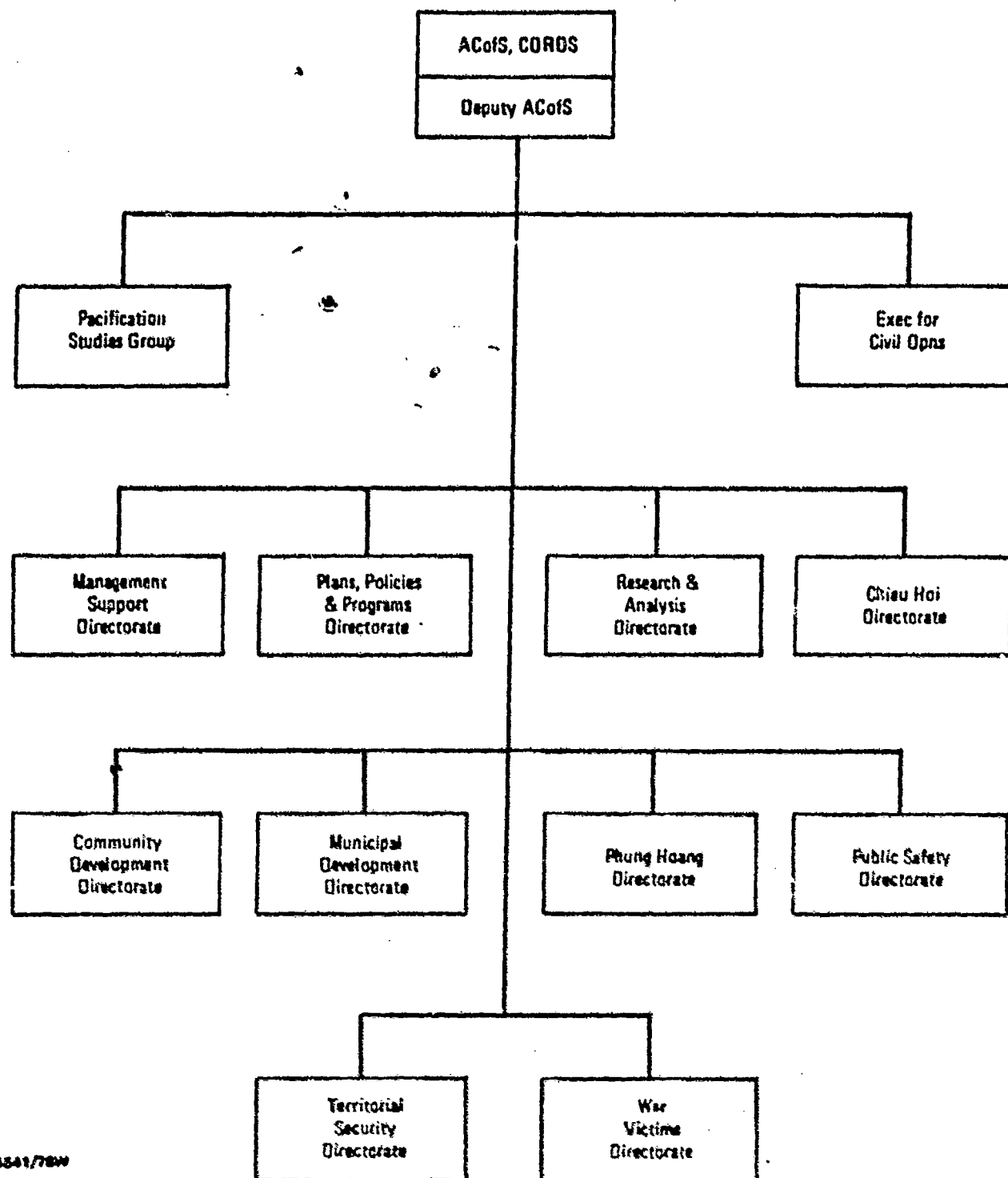


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SOURCE: Indochina Refugee Authored Monographs, The US Adviser, p. 127

Figure 14-6. CORDS in MACV Command Channel

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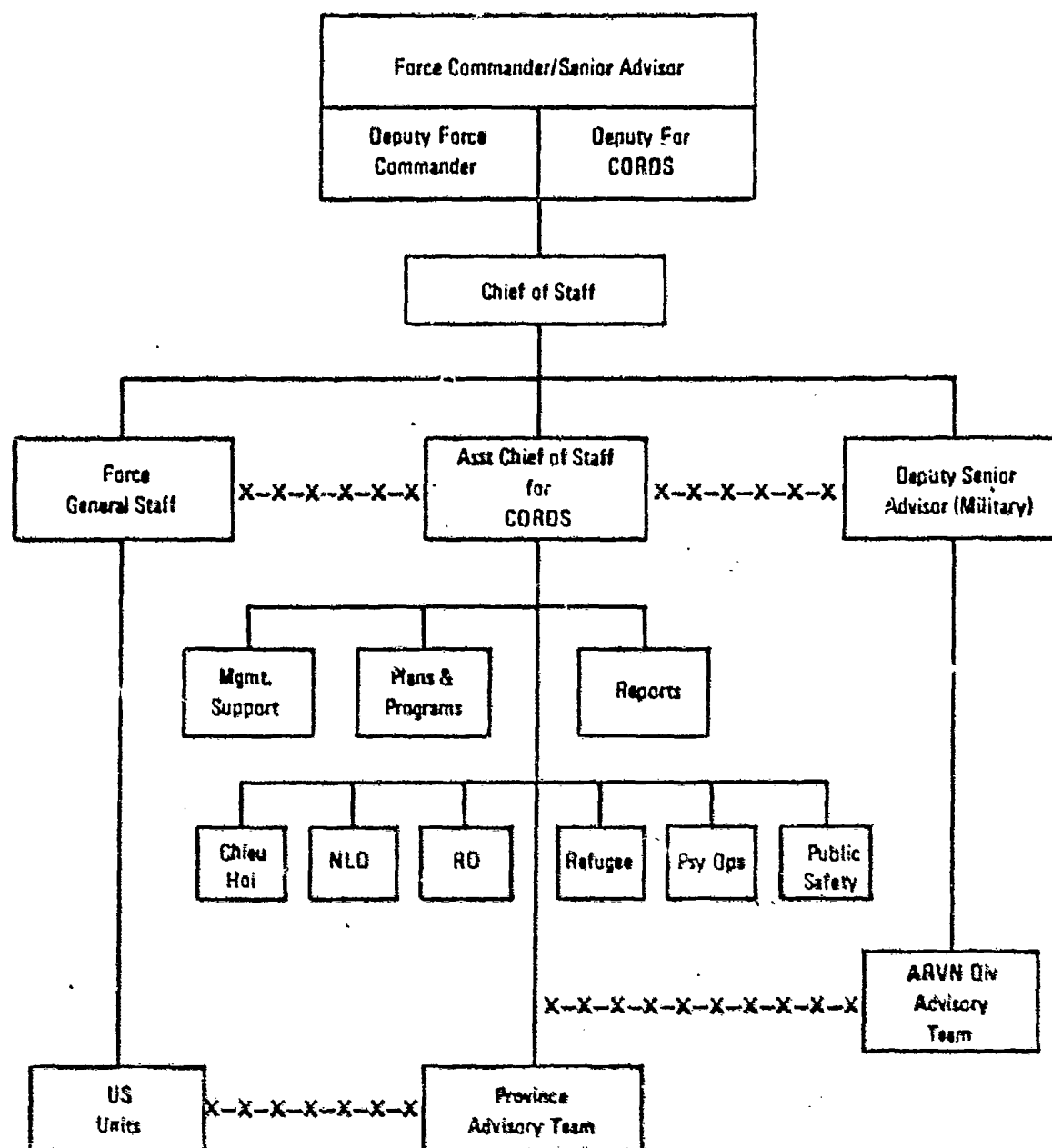
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SOURCE: Indochina Refugee Authored Monographs, The US Adviser, p. 129

Figure 14-7. Organization, Office of the Assistant Chief of Staff for CORDS, MACV



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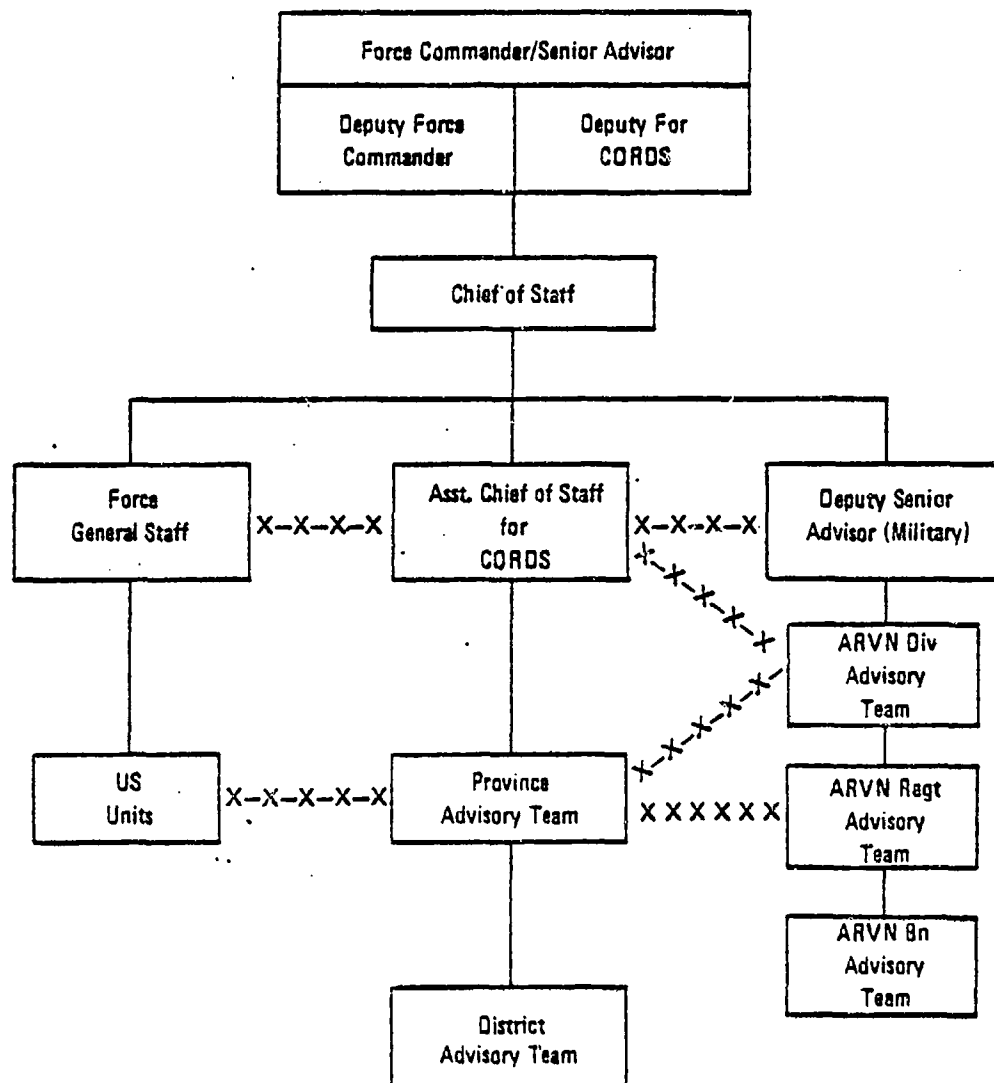


X-X-X Coordination - Military and CORDS matters.

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SOURCE: Indochina Refugee Authored Monographs, The US Adviser, p. 130

Figure 14-8. Organization, CTZ/Region CORDS



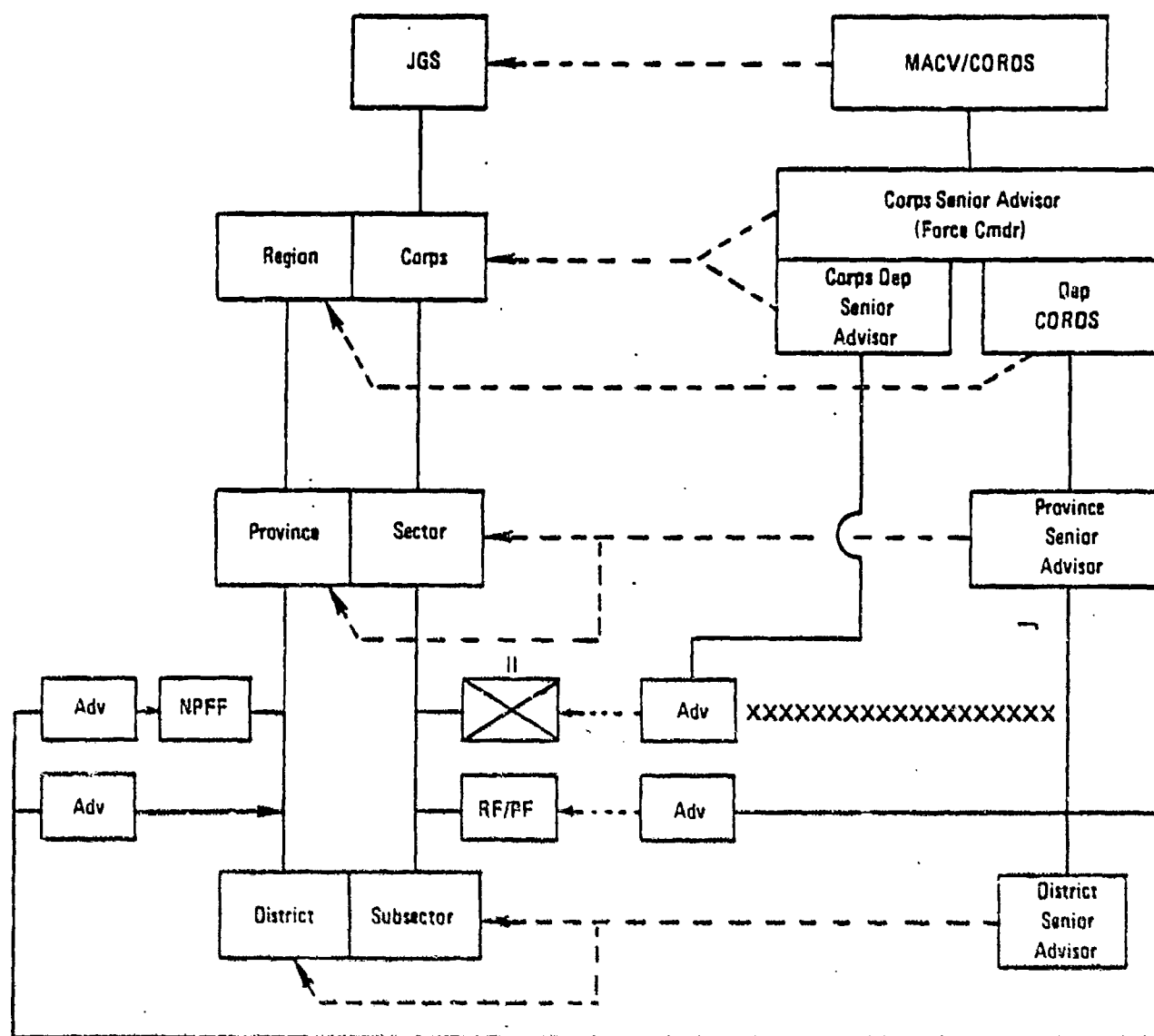
X-X-X-X Coordination - Military and CORDS matters.

XXXXXXX Operational Control when unit assigned on RO direct support mission.

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SOURCE: Indochina Refugee Authored Monographs, The US Adviser, p. 132

Figure 14-9. Advisory Relationships, Corps, Province and District Levels



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SOURCE: Indochina Refugee Authored Monographs, The US Adviser, p. 150

Figure 14-10. Advisory Relationships, ARVN Hierarchy

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- resurrection of Chieu Hoi operations to induce the communist guerrillas to change sides; and
- increased use of the RF/PF, police as well as RVNAF and FWMAF combat units integrated with non-military aid programs to improve internal security and expand the GVN's control into previously uncontested areas.

The APC proved to be the turning point in the history of pacification and civil affairs in RVN. It marked the beginning of the steady increase in the GVN's control of the countryside that had eluded earlier efforts. Success was due in part to the lack of VC reaction. RVNAF and US forces moved with relative ease into territory once contested. The lack of concerted opposition to the APC seemed to confirm that the Tet offensive had weakened seriously the military potential of the VC and had left open gaps in the rural areas that the ARVN, RF/PF and pacification cadres could fill.41/

From 1969 to 1971, the pacification effort steadily gained ground. And, as one respected expert in the field of counterinsurgency noted:

Although HES [Hamlet Evaluation System] criteria for secure hamlets were raised by March 1972, 70 percent of hamlets fell into the highest security categories, and that figure embraced more than 80 percent of the population of South Vietnam. Contemporary figures showed that the VC controlled only 2 percent of the people. In contrast to the earlier pacification schemes which relocated people to already secure areas, the gains of 1969-1971 were achieved by encouraging people to return to villages recently wrested from the VC.42/

There were other signs of VC weakness and growing South Vietnamese strength. The number of rank and file VC defectors to Saigon reached a peak, in 1969, of 4,000 a month. The Phoenix program, while never as successful as its adherents wished, nor as harsh as its critics complained, by 1969 was making some headway against clandestine VC activities. At the same time, the South Vietnamese armed forces, backed by the US, increased in size and received modern arms. For example, the American government provided M16 rifles to replace the World War-II vintage rifles used by

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Vietnamese forces from ARVN divisions down to the Popular Force platoons defending their own villages. The US and GVN also paid greater attention to strengthening the local police forces charged with providing internal security and law and order.43/

With improved security came a better chance to improve the standard of living. As fighting slackened, roads, bridges, and canals were reopened. Rice production improved. In 1970, President Thieu promulgated a sweeping land reform program called "Land to the Tiller" -- by September 1973, titles of ownership of more than 3,500 square miles of land were distributed among more than 650,000 owners.44/ This program, swiftly carried out, gave the land-hungry peasantry holdings of their own without charge. The government reimbursed the former owners of the land. With improved access to markets, the changes in land ownership transformed the rural economy.45/

Political reforms, though slow to take place, eventually began to follow the economic changes. The Thieu government began to release some of its centrally held powers and encourage villages to elect their own officials. The GVN overcame its reluctance to arm the RF/PF and village militia and saw them as evidence of a ever widening spread of their anti-communist cause. All of which was too little, too late! As the rapid collapse of South Vietnam in 1975 demonstrated, the foundations of the political and military gains of 1969-1971 were weak. The size of South Vietnam's armed forces was not a reliable measure of its political stature or the quality of its leadership. In combat, South Vietnamese soldiers too often showed little fighting spirit. However, to blame the RVNAF trooper, who failed in the face of well-planned offensives undertaken by well-armed North Vietnamese divisions, would be to ignore a sustained combat record of many years of war and heavy casualties.

Despite the success of the pacification program in improving security and material conditions in the countryside, it would appear that it failed in its larger, long-term objective--national solidarity. The Saigon government failed in this respect partly because it remained, to the end, a westernized, elite body, buttressed by US military and financial aid. Even if pacification succeeded in denying popular support to the Viet Cong, it failed to win completely the support of the masses.46/

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Pacification did succeed in making insurgency a doubtful proposition; thus, Hanoi chose to end the struggle for South Vietnam through conventional military operations.

### F. PROBLEMS THAT IMPEDED EFFECTIVE CIVIL AFFAIRS ACTIONS

#### 1. In the Military

Few professional soldiers care to be associated with a non-combat endeavor like civil affairs. Service in such a unit would not be likely to provide the recognition important to promotion and other career opportunities, at least when a "shooting-war" is on.

The American military has generally held the attitude that in a combat situation "things are soluble militarily." This is understandable because of their orientation -- World War II and subsequent experience has resulted in a tendency for the US military to opt for the use of fire power.<sup>47/</sup> Soldiers are inclined to want to participate in combat-related activities and leave civil affairs to civilian agencies. Vietnam was viewed as a war against the enemy rather than for the people. Emphasis was on seeking out and destroying the enemy rather than building up the confidence of the people by providing security in the country to protect them.

In time of war, the US military usually seeks quick and decisive solutions regardless of the dollar cost. The necessarily slow nature of civil affairs, especially in nation building situations, and regardless of the assets invested, means that it will normally have a secondary role in a military operation even though it may be the essential to final success. Nevertheless, the CORDS experience in Vietnam indicates that great emphasis can be placed on civil affairs matters in the midst of a combat environment with good results.

#### 2. Civil Affairs Experience

The US Army's experience with civil affairs in Europe and Japan during World War II was not directly applicable to Vietnam. The US Army Civil Affairs units assisted local citizens in the liberated territories after the battles. Few of these areas contained well organized guerrillas

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and major armed attacks from outside their borders did not continue as was the situation in Vietnam.

During Vietnam the situation that faced the US military was different. An excellent civil affairs school was conducted at Fort Gordon; however, most of the Army personnel involved in that training program belonged to Reserve Units that were not called up during the Vietnam War. US Army Special Forces personnel reportedly received little information during training on what to expect from their Vietnamese counterparts or how to deal with them. Special Forces programs were also hampered by the lack of qualified soldiers who knew the area to augment the Special Forces detachment for its civic action and psychological operations missions.48/

There was a tendency for Americans to provide things to the Vietnamese as a substitute for communicating ideas to them. For example:

We seem to feel that building new things will convert people, will create community spirit, will cause people to regret communism. In most cases these things are irrelevant or counterproductive. But we are still inclined to use material incentives when material incentives have been totally ineffective.49/

The Vietnamese regarded many of the US-inspired civil affairs programs as luxuries. Provision of health services, education, community development, refugee resettlement and land reform were all programs that the Vietnamese peasants had difficulty relating to their daily lives. They seemed to be much more concerned and preoccupied with the threat to their security.50/

### 3. Indigenous Problems

The challenges in SVN to a successful civil affairs operation were immense. In a 1968 report by John Paul Vann (considered to have been one of the most effective American advisors to have served in Vietnam) 51/ stated that 30 percent of the people support the government. Another 10 percent were VC, so civil affairs had to be aimed at the 60 percent of the population that was positively not interested in supporting either the government or the Viet Cong.

The constant threat of military actions and terror, abject poverty, poor communications and a low level of education made the problem

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formidable. Additionally, the population of South Vietnam was composed of many different ethnic groups with several dialects. The job of transmitting American desires clearly to the Vietnamese and translating accurately into the proper local tongues was difficult. In spite of those problems, many messages did get through over a period of years and the record shows an impressive degree of success in the post-Tet '68 period.52/

Americans were the driving force behind civic action; the Vietnamese for the most part were apathetic towards the programs. The GVN was new and inexperienced. Trained South Vietnamese leaders were rare, since the French had provided virtually no opportunity for middle or high-level leadership to develop. Those Vietnamese receiving civil affairs assistance viewed the programs with suspicion mainly because they did not believe that the GVN officials really cared about them. They felt the GVN leadership was more interested in maintaining power. The GVN wanted not to win them over, but merely to rule them.53/

There was generally a lack of concern on the part of district chiefs, province chiefs, Vietnamese Special Forces camp commanders and GVN officials for the welfare of the people. ARVN military personnel in many instances refused to cooperate and assist in civic action projects because they felt that manual labor which assists civilians was beneath a soldier's dignity. For example, Vietnamese soldiers were not interested in helping to build houses for the civilians on the grounds that they saw no reason to help someone else to have a house when their own families' housing was so poor. GVN officials did not feel a need to contribute to improving the welfare of their people and in some instances supplies intended for relief purposes or for civic action projects were siphoned off into commercial channels, or the intended recipients were made to pay for them instead of receiving them free.54/

The Vietnamese also had difficulty expressing any sort of appreciation for the help they were receiving because of the Vietnamese philosophy that it is the giver who carries favor with the Gods. One would think that if there was any sort of devotion to the Gods that the Vietnamese would have respected those providing assistance to them and



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consequently support for the GVN could be developed. This was not so, however, because of the suspicions of the GVN motives for providing assistance and because of the unsympathetic attitudes of the officials administering the programs.

Not only were Vietnamese soldiers and officials not interested in the welfare of the people, the concept of cooperative self help with an unpaid contribution from each participant was foreign to the Vietnamese nature and culture. Village members were only willing to work on community improvement projects if they were paid for the labor and materials they provided.55/

As mentioned earlier, the villagers were much more receptive to medical assistance than to any other of the civil affairs programs. This was because the benefits to the individual were direct and tangible.

#### 4. Institutional Inertia

The US civilian leadership generally recognized the nature of the Vietnam conflict early in its history. It was also understood by our senior US military and civilian leaders in Vietnam, but the recognition did not galvanize many to take the drastic steps required to translate that understanding into a program that would produce effective actions. As Ambassador Komer and others have commented in post-war critiques--institutions, both civilian and military tend to keep "doing their thing" unless a major effort is made to change them.56/ In Vietnam, the military quickly moved out, as was traditional, to grapple with the visible armed enemy. The American political advisors to the GVN gave their advice and it was politely received in the Oriental fashion and quickly discarded as it was also the nature of their institutions to keep "doing their own things." Only in 1966, after years of trial and error, did the President of the US direct that greater attention be paid to pacification.57/ Further emphasis came in 1967 with the installation of Ambassador Komer as Deputy to COMUSMACV for CORDS which gave the Pacification effort conspicuous attention at the top of the military structure and facilitated the use of military resources to achieve additional civil affairs goals. After

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the war Ambassador Komer had these reflections:

Why did we not change faster? Why did we not learn more? I will again cite institutional factors. To me, the greatest obstacle to change was "institutional inertia," the inherent reluctance of large organizations to change their preferred ways of functioning except slowly and incrementally under outside pressure. When the preferred way does not work--as it did not in Vietnam--their instinct is not to do things differently but to do more of the same--to pile on more coals, to bring in more troops. This is precisely what happened in Vietnam.58/

John Kenneth Gavraith had the following retrospective observation:

But it would be a mistake to picture bureaucratic need in terms of a too specific bureaucratic self-interest. A more important factor is pure organizational momentum. Bureaucracy can always continue to do what it is doing. It is incapable, on its own, of a drastic change of course. And the process by which it ensures its continuity--in the case of the Pentagon by which it prepares budgets, persuades the Office of Management and Budget, instructs its congressional sycophants--is itself highly organized. Thus the momentum. So it came about that after all national purpose in Vietnam had dissolved, and this was extensively conceded, bureaucratic purpose and momentum still served. The change in direction that is involved in stopping military operations, bureaucracy cannot accomplish.59/

Further reinforcement of this bureaucratic momentum phenomenon can be found in Leslie H. Gelb's recent works wherein he writes:

After the American presence in Vietnam was increased and the program enlarged, however, the bureaucracy became like a cement block in the trunk of a car--it added tremendous momentum. Cautious, sometimes resistant, in the earlier years, each bureaucratic organization then had its own stakes. The military had to prove that American arms and advice could succeed. The Foreign Service had to prove that it could bring about political stability in Saigon and build a nation. The CIA had to prove, especially after the Bay of Pigs

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fiasco, that it could handle covert action and covert paramilitary operations lest it chance having its operational missions in general questioned. The Agency for International Development (AID) like the State Department and the military, had to prove that pacification could work and that advice and millions of dollars in assistance could bring political returns. While this momentum effect took hold of the military earlier than the rest of the bureaucracy, by 1965 almost all career professionals became holier than the Pope on the subject of U.S. interests in Vietnam. This sounds like the investment trap, but it was a trap that affected the bureaucrats implementing policy much more than it affected the leaders who were making it.60/

### 5. Other Problems that Impeded Effective Civil Affairs Actions

The activities of MILCAP were designed to create a favorable impression upon the local population and to help win their allegiance. It was believed that gaining the support and cooperation of the people would be invaluable to efforts to destroy local guerrillas. Unfortunately, those civic action projects did not generally produce an attitude wherein the local people provided information which enabled the military effort to intercept and destroy local guerrillas.61/

Another problem which surfaced early on had to do with the approach to solving the pacification problem. There were two schools of thought as to how to approach the "other war" in Vietnam. The first was that of the Traditionalists who felt that the conflict was basically a military problem. Civil affairs was to be in the form of economic assistance directed primarily at strengthening and stabilizing the economic institutions of the country. When the military effort had successfully defeated the insurgents, there was to be a stable economic infrastructure already in place on which to build up the nation. The counterinsurgency approach, on the other hand, emphasized high impact programs that would bring immediate and visible benefits to the people and convince them that the government had something going for it. The Counterinsurgents believed that the war was a contest for the loyalty of the peasants. The conflict between the Traditionalists and the Counterinsurgents was never completely resolved. The establishment of CORDS in

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1967 was an attempt to unite the two schools of thought, but this papered over rather than resolved such problems as, for example, "whether to provide full-blown hospitals or simple clinics staffed by paramedical personnel".62/

Throughout the war there was a proliferation of American pacification programs and the logical consequence of this was to force American standards and values on the Vietnamese people. Many programs were designed to fit American conceptions of Vietnamese aspirations rather than considering what the Vietnamese themselves actually desired. It was difficult for the Vietnamese to absorb and implement the numerous American assistance programs, consequently, the payoffs in many instances were modest, tardy and short-lived.63/

### G. SOME VIEWS OF PACIFICATION

The effectiveness of the US Pacification and Civil Affairs efforts is mentioned time and time again in post-war analyses. Sir Robert Thompson, the respected British police expert during the insurgency in Malaya, lauded the progress made in RVN after Tet in 1968:

If one tries to talk about speed in pacification, it must be remembered that it will take as long to get back to the preferred status quo ante as it took the other side to get to the new position. If one thinks in terms of 1959 to 1966-67, the pacification was bound to be very, very slow. But the pace was altered by the fact that the enemy lost the forces in Tet which would have defended their own rear bases against the pacification program. The success of the program, which really started in late 1968, was staggering. In normal circumstances I would not have regarded it as possible, no matter what amount of effort was applied.64/

The real cost of the US Pacification effort may be immeasurable, but the relative economy of the effort in contrast with the total US military expenditure is obvious. The ubiquitous statistician of the Vietnam War, Thomas C. Thayer, described the costs of the US effort in these terms:

Pacification and the territorial forces received only about 6 percent of total US and GVN resources in FY

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1969. Efforts to keep the South Vietnamese economy from collapsing under the weight of the US presence consumed an amount equal to only 3 percent of the total expenditures.

The tremendous US expenditures in the war not only unbalanced the South Vietnamese economy, but eventually helped lead to unprecedented inflation in the United States, thereby adding still another kind of cost that can be attributed to the war.

In terms of resources, then, it was a "US war" in which the costs of US forces were immensely higher than those of South Vietnamese forces. As to type of war, it was, in resource allocation terms, first and foremost an air war, and second, a ground attrition campaign against VC/NVA regular units. Pacification was a very poor third.

It is difficult to break out the pacification expenditures from civil and military outlays (the latter included territorial security), but it is clear that even the greatly expanded pacification program of FY 1969 received only a small fraction of the US/GVN outlays, even though it was supposed to be a major dimension of the combined effort. For example, in FY 1969, artillery support alone cost about five times as much as all of the Vietnamese territorial forces.

In the words of one high-level participant: "If we had ever realized at all levels where the money really went in relation to what impact it had, it is at least questionable whether the United States would have fought the war the way it did."65/

In spite of its late start, the CORDS program is often described as a success. Douglas Blaufarb, a counterinsurgency expert, described the program as follows:

As far as concerns the counterinsurgency in Vietnam, we may conclude that after unconscionable delays which granted the enemy an almost insurmountable head start, his own mistakes combined with--at long last--a revived and greatly strengthened "new model" U.S. pacification effort and a greatly improved GVN appreciation of the requirements, brought pacification a considerable degree of success. But pacification was only part of the story, and the total effort was still short of what

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was needed to sweep the enemy off the board or convince the American public of the value of its burdensome involvement. The limited nature of the success reflected, among other things, the inability of the U.S. to establish within its own apparatus a clear, consistent, and firm understanding of the needs of the situation, most notably to knit together successfully the civilian and military efforts. In turn, that failure permitted the military to perform in a manner which aggravated the problem and brought public revulsion in the U.S. The mixed outcome also reflected the intractability of the political dilemma of Vietnam, the tension and opposition between political reform and stability. These failures brought the effort down in ruins and quite obscured the real accomplishments of the pacification effort, which were, in contrast to the rest, a notable achievement in a dark, confused, and tragic imbroglio from whose consequences it will take this country many years to recover.66/

### H. SUMMARY ANALYSIS AND INSIGHTS

Military civic action had its uses, but there was a tendency for the US to provide things to the Vietnamese as a substitute for communicating ideas to them. Civic actions tended to promote limited good will for the giver, but in the philosophy of Vietnam it is the giver who carries favor with the Gods and therefore, there was no necessity for the recipient to demonstrate or speak his thanks.67/

American governmental agencies involved with pacification and civil affairs programs tended to continue to support and justify those programs, good or bad, which they themselves had helped initiate or in which they had a parochial interest in perpetuating. In many cases the purpose of those programs was overcome by institutional inertia and played second fiddle to the individual agency's bureaucratic needs. It was not until the creation of CORDS with its single manager that there existed sufficient bureaucratic clout to bring the Washington, the in-country Americans and the Saigon bureaucracies in line. The single-manager concept facilitated control over the direction of the entire effort. Centralized management responsibility provided efficient and effective coordination and guidance to the programs

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being carried out at all levels. A single-manager can eliminate the problems of institutional inertia:

- bureaucratic self-interest which continues to carry out and promote programs regardless of their value;
- large bureaucracies which lose touch with the purpose of the overall effort; and
- the inability to change quickly or stop the momentum generated by large bureaucracies.

A successful civil affairs effort requires a single focus of authority and responsibility--centralized management--both in Washington and in the field and on both the US and host-country sides.

The US Marine leadership found that military civic action--dealing directly with the Vietnamese people on a small scale person-to-person basis--was a successful way of winning peasant support and defeating the insurgents locally. Unfortunately the GVN leadership, as well as ARVN and provincial officials, did not support fully the Marine CAP program. The small scale nature of the CAP effort did not require the involvement of the GVN leadership, ARVN or provincial officials, so consequently they often felt threatened by the program. The peasants tended to develop a loyalty to US Marines instead of to their own military or government officials. Though locally successful, Marine CAP and other MILCAP programs, failed to help the GVN win the political support necessary for survival as a viable political entity.

Civil affairs functions have limited application except in war, so it is inevitable that in peacetime the active forces will at best have a minimal capability for conducting civil affairs. Conversely, the Reserve Components can and should maintain and keep current a significant civil affairs capability.

In Vietnam the civil affairs problem was mainly the GVN's. The US could only advise and support. US advice was not generally accepted, sometimes because of failings on the part of the Vietnamese, more often because Americans failed to understand the problem or accommodate to the realities of that newly emerging society. Clearly the pacification effort

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succeeded as long as the US maintained a military presence in the RVN and demonstrated the ability and willingness to defend the RVN. Only once after the US withdrawal from RVN was that willingness demonstrated; a PAVN assault against Thai positions in Laos was turned back by USAF F-111 fighter bombers of the 7th Air Force in 1973.<sup>68/</sup> Thereafter, it became increasingly clear to the DRV that the US did not have the stomach for renewed fighting, and while the GVN and RVNAF grew weaker because of decreased aid, the DRV grew stronger with aid from the USSR and PRC. Enjoying a geo-strategic advantage, the DRV was able to commit vastly greater combat power than the RVNAF could withstand.

One of the greatest weaknesses in RVN was the absence of an institutional structure of government, and neither US nor GVN leaders learned how to create that structure; President Thieu failed to build an organic, widely based institution of government in the favorable period after Tet 1968, and that, in part, was a failure of civil affairs.<sup>69/</sup>

President Thieu refused to hold elections as required by the 1973 ceasefire, despite the urging of Ambassador Bunker, and thereby forfeited much external support for his administration; it would have been extremely difficult for the USG to have denied him military and economic support in the 1975 debacle had he provided the visible manifestation of popular support, which, some responsible observers insist, Thieu would have gained had he permitted an open election.<sup>70/</sup>

The people of South Vietnam did not rally to support the NLF or the DRV: not in 1963 when President Diem was killed, not in 1968 during the communist Tet offensive, not during the Easter offensive in 1972, and not even in 1975 when PAVN forces were obviously about to win a final victory. Pacification was working.

### I. LESSONS

- In a counterinsurgency situation successful civil affairs operations frequently have more lasting importance than winning conventional battles. Successful civil affairs programs are those



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that win the support of the population for the national leadership which is essential in a counterinsurgency war. Civil affairs programs demonstrate the interest of the national leadership in the welfare of the people by providing security and improvements in the standard of living of the local population. In a counter-insurgency situation, it should be recognized that military operations should support civil affairs objectives. Therefore, one of the obvious requirements in any counterinsurgency situation should be the appropriate training in civil affairs, both for unit commanders and civil affairs specialists.

- A policy of limited tours of duty for military personnel reduces the effectiveness of both military and pacification efforts, disrupts organizational cohesiveness, fails to capitalize on hard-won expertise, and requires immense financial and personnel expenditures.
- A successful civil affairs effort requires a single focus of authority and responsibility - centralized management - both in Washington and in the field and in both the US and host country.
- Civil affairs programs must involve the support of the host-country national leadership as well as local officials and the general population in order to achieve national solidarity and political stability of the host government.

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## APPENDIX A

### A LIST OF THE CIVIL AFFAIRS FUNCTIONS AND SUB-FUNCTIONS

#### 1. Civil Government

- a. Retention, modification, or replacement of existing governmental structure.
- b. Issuance of proclamations, ordinances, orders, instructions and restrictions pertaining thereto.
- c. Liaison and coordination with existing government officials, programs.

#### 2. Legal

- a. Survey of legal machinery.
- b. Supervision or control of criminal and civil courts.
- c. Modification, suspension or repeal of local civil and criminal laws.
- d. Claims settlements.

#### 3. Public Safety

- a. Retention, removal, recruitment and supervision of civil law enforcement officials.
- b. Restraint over civil populace. (Curfew, civilian registration, travel restrictions, rationing food, etc.)
- c. Provision of equipment, arms for police, fire protection.
- d. Perimeter security or checkpoints for protection of local population and/or local leaders.

#### 4. Public Health

- a. Supervision over public health officials and public health activities.
- b. Assistance in control of disease and care of civilian population. (Disposition of garbage, sewage disposal.)

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- c. Rehabilitation, reconstruction or construction of civilian medical facilities.
  - d. Establishment of nutritional standards.
- 5. Public Welfare
  - a. Military assistance to public and private welfare organizations.
  - b. Coordination and supervision of public welfare activities and agencies.
- 6. Public Finance
  - a. Development of monetary policy.
  - b. Circulation of a military currency.
  - c. Supervision or assistance in supervision of national or local tax collection.
  - d. Opening or closing of banks.
  - e. Investigation of black market activities.
- 7. Public Education
  - a. Supervision over educational system including public and private schools.
  - b. Retention or removal of public education officials and teachers.
  - c. Rehabilitation, reconstruction, or construction of public and private schools.
  - d. Provision of school supplies; assistance to school children.
- 8. Labor
  - a. Control or supervision over labor market.
  - b. Establishment of priorities for utilization of labor in rehabilitation of the economy.
  - c. Utilization of civilian labor for military purposes.
  - d. Screening of civilians for employment.
  - e. Wage controls including wage scales and schedules of hours of work.

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### 9. Economics

- a. Stabilization procedures; control and supervision over prices, economic life.
- b. Allocation of natural resources between military requirements and civilian needs.
- c. Reopening of stores, places of business.
- d. Reestablishment of flow of materials.

### 10. Commerce and Industry

- a. Rehabilitation or reconstruction of production facilities.
- b. Provision of fuel (coal, oil, or other) for industry.
- c. Supervision of physical output of commodities.
- d. Reestablishment of commercial relationships.

### 11. Food and Agriculture

- a. Control or supervision over agricultural output.
- b. Improvement of agricultural means of production (by providing equipment, seed, brood hogs, etc.)
- c. Control or supervision over means of transportation, distribution of agricultural products.
- d. Subsidies to producers.

### 12. Price Control and Rationing

- a. Establishment or continuance of price control and rationing. (Includes steps taken to avoid inflation resulting from purchasing power of occupational troops.)

### 13. Property Control

- a. Preservation of property of foreign governments or citizens.
- b. Supervision of purchase, confiscation, rent of property for military purposes.
- c. Determination of ownership and rights of equity claimants.

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- d. Planning, supervision, implementation of property restitution measures.

### 14. Civilian Supply

- a. Survey of supplies needed by civilians.
- b. Establishment of local organization for administration of civilian relief supplies.
- c. Supervision of accounting for and distribution of supplies.
- d. Donation of supplies to civilians.
- e. Utilization of military transportation facilities for transport of civilian supplies.

### 15. Public Works and Utilities

- a. Supervision over public works and utilities.
- b. Rehabilitation, reconstruction, or construction of public works and utilities.
- c. Utilization of public owned works and utilities for military purposes.

### 16. Public Communication

- a. Rehabilitation, reconstruction or construction of public communications facilities.
- b. Utilization of public communications for military purposes.
- c. Restrictions on and censorship of public communications.

### 17. Public Transportation

- a. Supervision over public transportation officials, facilities.
- b. Rehabilitation and reconstruction of public transportation facilities.
- c. Protection of public transportation systems and facilities.

### 18. Civil Information

- a. Survey, supervision, or control of public information media.

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- b. Employment of psychological operations units and teams. (To explain why Americans are there, enhance faith of people in government, propaganda against dissident elements, etc.)
- c. Coordination of psywar and PIO activities with respect to local communications to local population.

### 19. Displaced Persons and Refugees

- a. Separation of displaced persons from refugees.
- b. Location and establishment of camps for refugees and displaced persons.
- c. Plans for migration or evacuation of displaced persons or refugees.
- d. Transportation of refugees, displaced persons.

### 20. Arts, Monuments and Archives

- a. Supervision over recognition, identification and safeguarding of works of art, monuments and archives.
- b. Protection of culturally valued objects, i.e., town gates, graves, etc., against military destruction, damage.
- c. Prevention of utilization of buildings or locations of a cultural value for other purposes.

### 21. Religious Affairs

- a. Determination of religious doctrines and individual philosophies.
- b. Screening of religious leaders.
- c. Protection of individuals right to freedom of worship.
- d. Respect religious convictions and practices.
- e. Providing assistance to religious leaders, groups, institutions.

This appendix is extracted from Appendix E, The Role of Civilian Affairs in Marine Corps Operations by M. Dean Havron and Randolph C. Berkeley, Jr. prepared under ONR Contract No. N00014-66-C0065 by Human Sciences Research Inc. 1966.

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## APPENDIX B

EXTRACT FROM THE TRANSCRIPT OF AN ADDRESS BY JOHN PAUL VANN.  
TO THE SCHOOL OF INTERNATIONAL STUDIES, UNIVERSITY OF  
DENVER, 19 FEBRUARY 1969

John Paul Vann was a career officer who, in 1963, was the senior advisor to Vietnamese forces during the battle of Ap Bac. He retired from active service shortly thereafter, and in 1965 he returned to RVN as an AID Official. Except for periodic visits to the United States -- sometimes on home leave and sometimes on orders to provide testimony -- Mr. Vann remained in RVN until his death in an airplane crash in 1972 at which time he was Province Senior Advisor in II Corps Tactical Zone. He was a controversial figure, but his long tenure in Vietnam gave him an unusual insight into the war and the people.

While visiting the United States Vann often addressed academic audiences at the request of Professor Vincent Davis, first at the University of Denver and later at the University of Kentucky. Dr. Davis kindly made some of Mr. Vann's tapes and documents available to the BDM study team for purposes of this study.

The following extract from the transcript of a tape made by John Paul Vann is reprinted here because it provides an informal picture of the Civil-Affairs-Oriented CORDS program the year after the 1968 Tet offensive and of the man who was largely responsible for CORDS, Ambassador Robert Komer.

\* \* \*

The government is still ridden with corruption. Fortunately, the top man is not. President Nguyen Van Thieu has a good reputation but he has not moved as swiftly as a lot of us feel he could have to punish or move out of government some of the notorious corrupt elements that are still there, and in fact, one of them who was allegedly relieved for corruption under the previous government is now his personal adviser and a 3-star

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general. So there are a lot of things from that standpoint to be apprehensive about from the standpoint of the future. But from the standpoint of the enemy situation, from the standpoint of the improvements in the ARVN military structure, I would like to mention that the organization that I am with is called CORDS. It was established some--I guess--about 22 months ago now in May of '67, specifically to have an organization focused on province and district, which was separate from that that had previously gone down on the advisory side to a division advisory group -- in other words, a purely militarily oriented group to one that was both civilian and military-oriented on all activities at province and district levels which is essentially the government level in Vietnam.

Along with this are the territorial forces which are called the regional forces and popular forces in South Vietnam. They make up some 400,000 of the 800,000. This includes Regional Force, Popular Force and National Police and the Revolutionary Development Cadre, (Trung San?) forces and I guess if you throw all of those in together, we get about 480,000 armed personnel.

On this side of the house, there has been a really remarkable improvement in the military portion because these nearly half million troops were second and third class citizens up through certainly the end of 1966. Essentially, it was General Abrams' arrival in '67, his interest in them, the combination of the establishment of CORDS and Ambassador Robert Komer pushing to get rid of incompetent officials at province and district levels, all these combined to bring about a treatment of the Regional and Popular Forces in a much better fashion than they had been treated before and as a result, just to cite statistics, spurious though they may be, in the Third Corps area where I have approximately 120,000 of these forces, we went from 1966, before CORDS was established, with our soldiers in the provinces and districts losing more men than they killed enemy and losing twice as many weapons as weapons they captured. And in 1967, our first year operation, they got their score just about even. In 1968 they greatly reversed it. In 1969 in Third Corps and I understand this was largely true throughout the country, the ratio of enemy killed to friendly killed was 3.7 to 1.



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The ratio of weapons captured to weapons lost was 14 to 1. That is a rather remarkable change. I know how dubious any statistics are, but when they are over such a long period on such a mass scale as this, you can see that there is indeed a substantial improvement in these forces. Regrettably, the regular forces of that country, those that are called ARVN, these are the divisions: regiments and battalions--have not improved nearly as much and, in fact, I would say they have improved only incrementally. I might pass on to you that with all the maligning that has been done of Ambassador Robert Komer who did head up the pacification effort and who was rather optimistic and subject to making some rather difficult-to-justify statements, particularly in the light of what later happened, his pressure for the release of officials at province and district levels, his pressure for the improvement of the soldiers that CORDS advise, that is the RF and PF versus the ARVN soldiers, is now becoming evident so that in my judgment I consider that this one individual contributed more toward success in Vietnam than any American who has been there. In other words, more than any of the four-star generals or one-star generals or colonels or foreign service officers or ambassadors, because he had a rather single-minded purpose of putting leverage on the government of Vietnam. Which he did. And he was brash, he was disliked by the Vietnamese and he was disliked by most Americans and was distinctly disliked by the press. But in 18 months there, he accomplished a great deal and much of what is now favorable in that country, I attribute to the actions that took place under his direction and his leadership. I like to say that the current situation is one in Vietnam of confusion on the part of the Vietnamese. I was mentioning that Ambassador Bob Komer put leverage on the Vietnamese which is something I have been advocating since 1962. In that, I have never thought that they have done more than about 30 percent of what they are capable of doing and I have long become aware that they will never do anything that someone else is willing to do for them. In fact, probably we Americans wouldn't either. I find it interesting that our government, which I am part of, has always to my knowledge, failed to apply pressure either behind the scenes or overtly in Vietnam against the government of Vietnam. Yet on such things

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as the Paris Peace Talks, we were in the position of literally insulting the government of Vietnam six ways from Sunday, and some of the statements that Clifford was making were really literally insulting the government of Vietnam and the reason I find this puzzling is that we show a willingness to do in public, in a manner that cannot be effective, to take a stand with the government of Vietnam, that we always fail to do officially and in private behind the scenes. All of you are well aware of the Oriental fetish with saving face and I have long pointed out to my superiors that all the Vietnamese with whom I have dealt are very amenable to advice and to suggestions if they are given in the proper fashion, that is, if they are not made to look like puppets in the eyes of their own people. And I have long been an advocate of a very hard line with the government of Vietnam but one which starts at the very top with an understanding between the heads of the two nations and particularly at the ambassador level and the four-star level, MACV, reaching an understanding with their opposite numbers in the government of Vietnam as to what the objectives are now and what the Vietnamese obligations are to reach these objectives -- what the American obligations are to help them reach these objectives and then a kind of holding of the feet to the fire to be sure that this is done. The few times and on the few occasions when real pressure has been applied and it was primarily applied by Ambassador Bob Komer, and the response has always been just what the doctor ordered and the Vietnamese have produced.

The reason I bring this up now is that I have been an advocate, as some of you may have read in an article by Peter Arnett several months ago, of unilaterally reducing the U.S. military strength in Vietnam, for two purposes. One, to reduce the costs and casualties and secondly to place a little pressure on the government of Vietnam to better utilize its own resources. Now, my military colleagues with whom I have argued until I am blue in the face will absolutely not agree to reduce one single man in Vietnam. They see an enemy there, the last one of which they have not killed and feel that it is foolish to reduce forces until the enemy is eliminated.

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Regrettably, I guess we all are sick of saying it -- this is a very political war there and the enemy is going to always be there because the North Vietnamese do not have even 10 percent of their regular army in South Vietnam now. They do have probably 130,000, maybe 15 percent of their regular army, in South Vietnam and they have not shown any responsiveness at all either to a bombing halt or to carrying on for the bombing with regard to infiltration. Infiltration has taken place in South Vietnam at a rate necessary to keep their force level at what they have established it. In other words, when they took heavy losses during Tet, they were infiltrating at the rate of 30,000 per month. More recently they have drawn their forces back to the border, their losses have cut down, they infiltrate at the rate of only about 5 or 6 thousand a month. But that infiltration bears no relationship to either our air power or our air strikes or to our success on the ground. It is simply something that can be done and if any of you ever have occasion to walk around some of those jungle trails, you would understand why it can be done and why it would take literally the entire United States Army and a couple more South Vietnamese armies to effectively stop infiltration.

CHAPTER 14 ENDNOTES

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Military Civic Action--The use of preponderantly indigenous military forces on projects useful to the local population at all levels in such fields as education, training, public works, agriculture, transportation, communications, health, sanitation, and others contributing to economic and social development, which would also serve to improve the standing of the military forces with the population. (U.S. forces may at times advise or engage in military civic actions in overseas areas), p. 90.

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20. Shulimson and Johnson, pp. 137-144.

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22. Ibid., p. 190.
23. Shulimson and Johnson, pp. 138.
24. Corson, p. 177.
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CHAPTER 15  
MEASURES OF PROGRESS, OR KEEPING SCORE

A better analogy than conventional land war would be our air campaign against NVN [North Vietnam]. The enemy can influence the attrition rate per sortie by the amount and quality of his defenses. But we control the number of aircraft lost per month--which we trade-off against damage to NVN--by controlling the number of sorties. If we wanted to lose fewer aircraft per month, we could fly fewer sorties. And if the VC/NVA want to lose fewer troops per month, they can make fewer attacks. They can trade-off lower U.S. casualties for lower VC/NVA casualties, and time.

Alain Enthoven 1/

The bane of my existence and just about got me fired as a division commander. They were grossly exaggerated by many units primarily because of the incredible interest shown by people like McNamara and Westmoreland. I shudder to think how many of our soldiers were killed on a body-counting mission--what a waste.

(A US general's comment on  
body count policy)  
Douglas Kinnard,  
The War Managers 2/

A. INTRODUCTION

1. The Issue

The political-military conflict in Vietnam was extremely controversial in a number of categories. One of the most contentious issues was the method used to keep score, and especially of one of its key components--the "body count."

A major dilemma facing the US decision and strategy makers was how to measure progress -- or lack of it -- in a frontless, and sometimes faceless, war. The solution which evolved was called "Measurements of Progress" (MOP). This chapter examines MOP: their origins, validity, use, and impact.

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### 2. Historical Setting

From the beginning of recorded warfare, comparative numbers have played an important role in the planning, conduct, and analysis of battles and wars. Traditionally, commanders have tended to overestimate the strength and casualties of the enemy and to minimize their own. Professional soldiers, however, always have relied heavily on training, experience, and judgments for evaluating the relative balance in such intangibles as morale, will, esprit, and of the skill of the commanders. Strategy, tactics, deception, and surprise have comprised the core of the Art of War.

Science and technology, especially in this century, have diluted and distorted the art form of war. The relative strengths and weaknesses of opposing weapons systems, such as tanks and aircraft, are subject to quantification and systematic analysis. Increasingly the soldier became dependent on and challenged by the scientist and the technocrat.

In World War II, the US Army air forces were pioneers in employing "systems analysis" in the conduct of military operations. A team of bright young men, including Robert Strange McNamara, was sent to England to help evaluate the strategic bombing campaign. Scientific analysis and analysts had earned a degree of visibility and respectability in the defense community.

The explosion of the two atomic bombs over Japan in 1945 was a revolution in more ways than one. With few exceptions the military professionals were out of their element; due to their traditions and experiences they found themselves playing second fiddle in the nuclear orchestra of civilian strategists such as Herman Kahn and those in think tanks like the RAND Corporation. Inter- and intraservice rivalries for roles, missions, and funds complicated the issues and have contributed to the increased cost of defense.

Dwight D. Eisenhower's strategy of "Massive Retaliation" appealed to many as a simple, rational, and cost effective way out of the service and industrial scramble for pieces of the atomic pie. But it didn't last beyond the final term of office of its patron. General Maxwell Taylor, for one, in his short but pithy Uncertain Trumpet, took its flaws severely to task.

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John F. Kennedy's "New Frontier" government included Robert McNamara, who sincerely believed that systematic and logical analysis would solve most of the problems of business (Ford Motor Co.) as well as national security (Department of Defense). One of his principal "weapons" in bringing "order out of chaos" was the newly created office of Systems Analysis, headed by the intelligent and able Alain C. Enthoven. The uniformed military leaders soon found that their experience, judgment and intuition were challenged on all fronts, particularly with respect to competing weapons systems. The JCS advice was found narrow and wanting, perhaps unfairly so, during the Bay of Pigs fiasco.<sup>3/</sup> Their major recommendations were not accepted, probably wisely so, during the Cuban Missile crisis.<sup>4/</sup> Except for the urbane insider, Maxwell Taylor, who was then in mufti, the military leadership was not held in very high esteem by the self-confident new administration.

The military responded to this frustrating style of management in several ways. At first they openly expressed hurt and indignation to their traditional allies in Congress and to their understanding friends in the press, such as the prestigious Hanson Baldwin.<sup>5/</sup> Later they decided to fight fire with fire and sent a number of their brighter young officers back to school to learn about Operations Research and Systems Analysis (ORSA); some of the more promising senior ones were dispatched to the Harvard Business School. Between 1961 and 1969 over 100 military officers served in DoD's office of Systems Analysis.<sup>6/</sup> The military became speared on the horns of a dilemma: they were trying to play catch-up ball in the management arena and at the same time trying to resurrect the mystique of professional judgment. It can be argued that the war in Vietnam neither validated nor disproved either approach, and more so that the proper balance between the two has yet to be struck.

### B. THE SEARCH FOR A MOP HANDLE IN VIETNAM

During their eight-year effort to defeat the Viet Minh's "People's War," the French military never solved the problem of measuring and

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evaluating the shifting balance of the political-military power. They concentrated too much of their intelligence on conventional order of battle data. It was a young scholar, Bernard Fall, who devised a somewhat crude but more effective method for determining which side had effective control of which villages; this was accomplished largely by checking official administrative records to see where the government was able to collect taxes on a regular basis.<sup>7/</sup>

The US officials were handicapped even more than were the French in devising valid and useful measuring devices. In the first place our understanding of our allies, the enemy, the environment and the nature of the conflict was woefully inadequate initially and expanded too slowly. The different biases, perceptions, and institutional loyalties of the US agencies in RVN -- Embassy, MAAG, CIA, USOM, etc. -- compounded to create confusion in country and thus in Washington. (This shortcoming is a major thread that is woven throughout Volume V).

During the crucial early days of the US involvement in Vietnam, the US agencies in country were almost totally dependent on the French and later the GVN for hard intelligence data. The US MAAG had no intelligence missions or capabilities, and the advisors were not permitted to accompany RVNAF units on combat operations until 1961. The Taylor-Rostow Mission, in October 1961, highlighted the significant intelligence shortcoming in their report.<sup>8/</sup> What information the MAAG did solicit and receive was primarily conventional; the true nature of the conflict was only dimly perceived.

The British had done much better in "sorting out" and exploiting the critical data in the comparatively low-order insurgency in Malaya. The Robert Thompson Mission to the GVN initially met with resistance from the MAAG, based on national pride and differing perceptions of the conflict. President Diem and his brother Nhu, however, decided that Thompson's concepts supported one of their own pet schemes, the so-called Strategic Hamlets. Nhu set unrealistic quotas for the Province Chiefs who, out of fear and desire for favor, competed with each other to "fortify" the most hamlets. US field advisers and the press became skeptical and then critical of that blatant "numbers game." (See Chapter 5, "Pacification and Vietnamization," Volume V).

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The suspect reporting of casualties - friendly and enemy - by RVNAF also helped set the stage for the expanding "credibility gap." General Westmoreland stated that the "body count" procedure was established in 1962 in order to make the reports more acceptable to the press.<sup>9/</sup> As the war escalated, both the term and the concept became the vulnerable target of ridicule and revulsion.

If the conventional military intelligence was poor during the early years of the insurgency, the data on the "shadow war" was even worse. Yet there was pressure from Washington for reliable data and evidence of progress. As early as 1963 efforts were made to measure "security" in the countryside, but they, too, were controversial.<sup>10/</sup>

A mass of data was sent to Washington, but it was difficult to correlate and interpret. In their November 1963 trip to RVN, McNamara and McCone (CIA) were unhappy with the data. Bill Bundy, in a January 1964 letter to David Nes, (Deputy Chief of Mission, US Embassy Saigon), stated that the Reporting system needed to be improved in three general areas:

- All the essential elements of information (EEI) and indicators were required;
- The grouping and interpretation of data had to be improved; and
- Duplication had to be eliminated.

Bundy also asked his assistant in ASD/ISA, BG Youngdale, to come up with a progress reporting system for all USG agencies.<sup>11/</sup>

In May 1964 a joint GVN-US reporting system was established.

It attempted to portray military security, with little emphasis on administrative control and economic development. Reports on each hamlet in the GVN pacification plan were developed by the U.S. District Adviser and the Vietnamese District Chief and sent separately to their respective headquarters at province and Saigon. The U.S. adviser was supposed to make an independent assessment, but this was often impossible because he seldom knew the history of his district very well and had to rely on Vietnamese interpreters to obtain information in the hamlets. Thus, the system is best described as a joint GVN/US one.

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There is probably an optimistic bias in the 1964-67 statistics because the reporting tended to concentrate on changes resulting from ongoing work. As a result, backsliding in areas previously "pacified" probably didn't show up as well as progress in active areas.12/

With all of its recognized faults, that system lasted until January 1967.

### C. THE PIVOTAL HONOLULU CONFERENCE, FEBRUARY 1966 13/

#### 1. The Conference

The Honolulu conference of February 1966 produced the US objectives in RVN for the year; it also established a basis for the attrition strategy and the revised MOP. At the close of the conference, Bill Bundy and John McNaughton drafted instructions and goals for General Westmoreland and handed him a copy which served as an informal directive to him (See Appendix A).

#### 2. Instructions and Goals

The paper had three main headings:

- Increase the strength of South Vietnamese, US and 3d-country forces in South Vietnam.
- Expand the offensive actions of such forces while providing essential defense.
- Achieve the following results in 1966:

(The instructions under the last heading included were numerous and included several objectives that reflected a statistical thrust):

- Increase the population in secure areas to 60 percent from 50 percent.
- Increase the destruction of VC/PAVN base areas to 40-50 percent from 10-20 percent.
- Attrite, by year's end, VC/PAVN forces at a rate as high as their capability to put men in the field.

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### 3. COMUSMACV's Concept

On the whole, the directive meshed well with General Westmoreland's concept of operations.<sup>14/</sup> Later, he commented that those instructions started the "War of Statistics."<sup>15/</sup> Such a war had been underway for sometime, but perhaps the conference did escalate it from an annoying skirmish to an all out offensive.

In his "Recollections on the Honolulu Conference," <sup>16/</sup> Westmoreland wrote that President Johnson:

- Pressured him to get a commitment on how long the war would last (his response was no more precise than "several years").
- Urged everyone to "get with the problem" and that he would hold other meetings to check progress.
- Wanted a system set up to measure progress in order to get "the coon skins nailed to the wall."

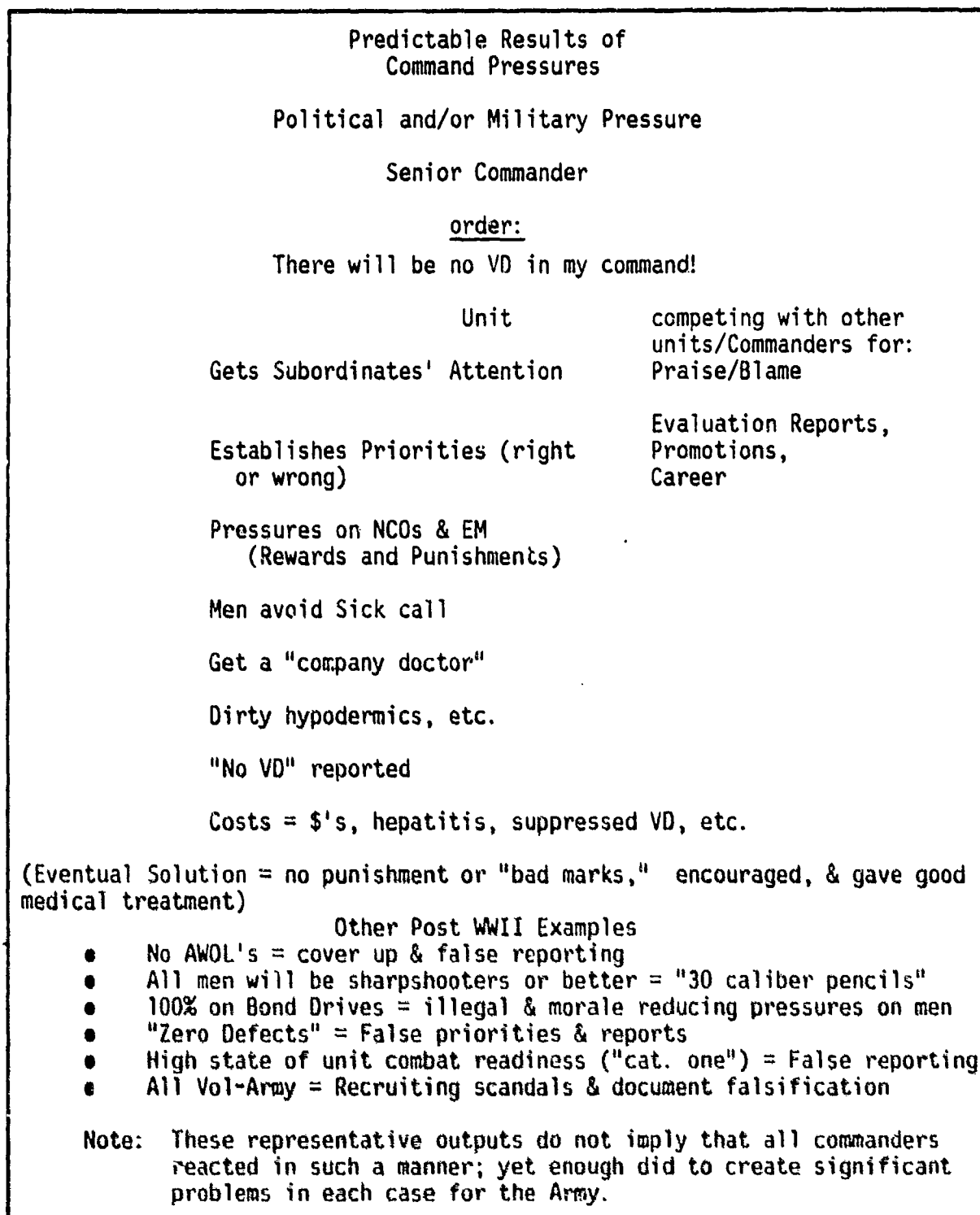
### 4. The Pressure

The President thus displayed his growing frustration at the complex and expensive war which was getting more and more in the way of his "Great Society." His demands for measurable progress generated additional heat on US officials in Washington and in Saigon; that pressure was transmitted through the various command channels down to the lowest operating elements with mixed results (see Figure 15-1 for a graphic portrayal of typical military command pressure).

## D. THE SCORE CARDS CHOSEN

### 1. The Hamlet Evaluation System

The conflict in Indochina had many facets, of course, but can be roughly divided into three major segments: the air war over the DRV and Laos, the ground war against PAVN and PLAF main force units, and the political-military contest for territorial and population control. The latter, for want of a better term, was called Pacification and was the most difficult to grade accurately. In October 1966, displeased with the then current evaluation system, Secretary McNamara asked the CIA to come up with



SOURCE: BDM Research and Analysis

Figure 15-1. Results of Command Pressures



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a better one.<sup>17/</sup> They did, and it was titled the Hamlet Evaluation System (HES). Although imperfect and controversial -- as was everything else concerned with the conflict -- it was a significant improvement over previous measuring systems; HES went into effect in January 1967 and was later refined by the CORDS organization.

What exactly was HES and how was it different? Thomas Thayer, an ex-Systems Analyst in OSD, summed up its major features:

The HES was designed to yield comprehensive, quantifiable data on the security and development of every hamlet in South Vietnam under some degree of GVN control and to identify hamlets under VC/NVA control. The system was completely automated for computer processing, and duplicates of the CORDS computer tapes were sent to Washington.

The system was a U.S. reporting system, although American advisers had to work closely with their Vietnamese counterparts in implementing parts of it. This turned out to be a critically important difference from the old GVN/US system, because it gave the U.S. adviser complete control of the final scores and enabled him to make an independent report on the pacification performance of his Vietnamese counterpart. Also, the new system represented the view from the cutting edge, since higher echelons were not allowed to change the ratings.<sup>18/</sup>

The 10,000 or so hamlets in RVN were graded so that each hamlet or population unit emerged with a composite score ranging from A-best through E-bad, or as VC/NVA controlled.<sup>19/</sup> The systems analysis office in OSD became the official repository for the computerized data.<sup>20/</sup>

When William Colby took over the reins of CORDS from Robert Komer, he wanted additional primary evaluation data, so he persuaded President Thieu to permit opinion polls in the countryside.

To supplement the Hamlet Evaluation System's reports on what was happening in the countryside, I thought it essential to gain an understanding of Vietnamese public opinion as to whether our programs were having the political effects they were designed to

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have. So we set up a polling mechanism and sent carefully chosen Vietnamese, working for CORDS, throughout the rural areas to discuss with the villagers their opinions on everything from their view of the different military forces in the neighborhood to their "aspirations for the future."21/

The results of the polls were not published but copies were sent to Thieu, who found them generally useful and encouraging, as did CORDS and MACV.

### 2. Other Yardsticks

The air war was scored by more conventional means, such as sorties flown, tons of bombs dropped, targets destroyed or damaged, trucks "killed," enemy killed by air (KBA), etc. The Bomb Damage Assessment (BDA) for the Interdiction campaign was difficult (much of the Ho Chi Minh Trail System was jungle covered), and the claimed results were debatable.

Progress in the ground combat continued to be evaluated by the ratios of friendly to enemy killed, weapons lost and captured, opposing maneuver battalions, enemy infiltration rate, etc. Other data were collected to compare with the quantitative goals set at the Honolulu conference. At his Commanders Conference, 24 July 66, Gen. Westmoreland presented these goals to his senior officers, but in a somewhat different order and with some of the numbers changed. (See Figure 15-2 for a comparison of the two sets of goals).22/ The major difference for the change in numbers was the almost daily exchanges between MACV, CINCPAC, JCS, and OSD - not to mention GVN.23/ The rearranged priorities could be explained by the audience addressed -- US military commanders; GVN and RVNAF had the primary responsibility for Pacification.

Practically every sort of data available was compiled and sent to Washington for strategic analysis. The data covered military and civil (political, economic, etc.) matters; some of it, such as the opening of lines of communication, were relevant to both. (Figure 15-3 represents only a sample of the data collected). The use and usefulness of that flood of statistics will be discussed in the following sections.

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<u>MACV GOALS FOR 1966</u>	
<u>Honolulu Conference (8 Feb 66)</u>	<u>MACV Cmdrs. Conf. (24 July 66)</u>
1. Increase the population in secure areas to 60 percent from 50 percent.	1. Increase enemy base areas denied from 10% to 40-50%.
2. Increase the critical roads & railroads open for use to 50 percent from 20 percent.	2. Inflict losses on enemy at rate as high as their ability to put men in the field.
3. Increase the destruction of VC/PAVN base areas to 40-50 percent from 10-20 percent.	3. Increase critical roads & RR's open from 30% to 50%.
4. Ensure the defense of all military bases, political and population centers and food-producing areas now under government control.	4. Ensure defense of all military bases, political and population centers, and food producing centers.
5. Pacify the four selected high-priority areas -- increasing the pacified population in those areas by 235,000.	5. Increase population in secure areas from 50% to 60%.
6. Attrite, by year's end, VC/PAVN forces at a rate as high as their capabilities to put men into the field.	6. Pacify four priority areas by increasing pacified population by 235,000.
	7. US/FWMAF to 52 total US Bns by June 66.
	8. Increased RVNAF strength from 668,015 (May 66) to 674,400 by June 66.
Note the change in the number and the order of priorities.	

SOURCE: Gen. W. C. Westmoreland's Papers

Figure 15-2. MACV Goals for 1966

<u>Military</u>	<u>Civil</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Order of Battle (opposing Maneuver Bn's)</li> <li>● Enemy strength (Main Force, Guerrillas, VCI)</li> <li>● Enemy Infiltration Rate</li> <li>● Casualties (total, per contact, &amp; ratio)</li> <li>● Number of Hoi Chanh (returnees to GVN)</li> <li>● Weapons lost &amp; captured (plus ratio)</li> <li>● RVNAF strength (gains &amp; losses)</li> <li>● Field (Paddy) strength</li> <li>● Battalions/Co's on operations/security</li> <li>● Patrols and Ambushes</li> <li>● VCI (Total &amp; Eliminated)</li> <li>● Enemy contacts per Bn/Day, etc.</li> <li>● Enemy base area neutralized</li> <li>● Aircraft sorties/day/week/month</li> <li>● Tons of ordnance employed</li> <li>● Targets destroyed/damaged</li> <li>● Trucks "killed" per sortie</li> <li>● Aircraft attrition rates</li> <li>● Acres of jungle cleared</li> <li>● Progress of Vietnamization</li> <li>● Rate of US withdrawal (Also masses of data on personnel, logistics, and medical matters, etc.)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Hamlet Evaluation System (HES) objective &amp; subjective data</li> <li>● Percent of Population Pacified &amp; Territory "Secure"</li> <li>● Refugees generated &amp; resettled</li> <li>● Rice &amp; Rubber Production</li> <li>● Price of rice</li> <li>● Inflation Rate</li> <li>● Piaster Exchange Rate</li> <li>● Unemployment Rate</li> <li>● GVN Balance of Payments</li> <li>● Kidnappings</li> <li>● Assassinations/attempts</li> <li>● Voter Registration</li> <li>● Public opinion Polls</li> <li>● Hectares of "land to the tiller"</li> <li>● Roads &amp; RR interdicted/opened/reopened*</li> <li>● Bridges destroyed/built/rebuilt*</li> <li>● Canals interdicted/opened</li> <li>● Birth/Death rates</li> <li>● Estimated civilian casualties (RVN &amp; DRV)</li> </ul>
<p>* Also of use to the military.</p>	

Figure 15-3. Sample of Data Collected to Measure Progress in RVN

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### E. USE OF THE DATA

#### 1. General

Without a doubt a great deal of accurate data was required by planners and decision makers in the field and in Washington if that complex and costly war was to be planned and prosecuted effectively. Yet USG spent over a \$150 billion on the war, much of it inefficiently. (See Chapter 10, "Logistics," in Volume VI). Much of the waste was due to the initial underestimation of the enemy, misunderstanding of the true nature of the conflict, the hasty US buildup of forces and bases, and the lack of tight coordination of US agencies in Saigon and Washington. (These shortcomings are examined in Volumes I through V).

#### 2. In Saigon

Initially the US country team in the RVN collected and analyzed (possibly inexpertly) all sorts of data in an attempt to get a firm grip on just what was going on and to determine how best to react. Later, as pressures from the president and his appointees mounted, data were deployed in various forms to show to the press, the public, the USG, and the enemy that measurable progress was being made, proof that the US was "winning" the war. That does not imply, by any means, high level intent to deceive anyone; the differences between "the evidence" and reality (which varied from time to time) were created by a number of factors: lack of understanding of the situation, innate American optimism and "can do" spirit, faith in the overwhelming American economic and military power, ego and emotional involvement, and human wishful thinking. Through 1972, as events turned out, the RVN and the US often were doing better than detractors would admit, but not as well as officials believed or hoped. It was inconceivable to many US leaders, civil and military, that any "rational enemy" could or would stand up for long to the unequal strength and punishment.

#### 3. In Washington

Few of the leaders in the USG understood the nature of the conflict as well as did those in the field. In addition they were faced with increasingly intractable political and economic dilemmas. With growing

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impatience and frustration, they attempted to get a firm handle on the war in order to manage it more effectively. Yet, the virtual "blank check" given to COMUSMACV remained open until after the 1968 Tet offensive. Alain Enthoven charged that: "In Vietnam, no one insisted on systematic efforts to understand, analyze, or interpret the war."24/

A common criticism by military men is that the war was over-managed by "armchair strategists" in Washington who were far removed from reality. Enthoven, however, claimed that:

If the highest officials in Washington and Saigon were blinded by the deluge of statistics showing only change and activity, it was largely because of a deep resistance to trying to run the war from Washington. The problem was not overmanagement of the war from Washington; it was undermanagement. The problem was not too much analysis; it was too little.25/

The primary purpose of this chapter is to shed some light on the relative merits of such charges and countercharges. The office of systems analysis claimed (perhaps overly modestly) that it had little to do with the crucial decisions of the war in Vietnam and no role at all - excluding their normal budgetary one - prior to June 1965.26/ As the US military buildup started, systems analysts did perform a useful function by working with JCS and the services (not without friction) in organizing the "force package" requests and relating them to dollars, procurement, etc. They also were instrumental in working out a model which would project aircraft losses in order to ensure timely replacements.27/ When they attempted to get into the military province of strategy and tactics they were more vulnerable. Their insatiable requests for data increased the work load at headquarters and communications systems up and down the chain of command.

F. USEFULNESS OF THE MOP

1. Criteria

If any measure is to be of value to planners and decision makers, it must meet certain logical standards such as:

- Accuracy. This is relative, since in a war one knows few things for certain, especially about the enemy.
- Consistency. Much of the data needed are based on subjective evaluations and thus are subject to individual biases, which are often assumed to be consistent in pattern.
- Relevancy. A deluge of unrelated data confuses, distorts, and conceals; data portrays massive movement in all sectors, making it difficult to focus on the skimpier data illuminating key issues.
- Completeness. The other side of the coin requires that all information which bears directly on the problem be included; due to the nature of politics and war, much pertinent data can not be quantified and thus is subjective. Parenthetically, so are much data which has been translated to numbers.
- Continuity. One-time information is useless for producing useful trends and patterns. That fact becomes more critical if the "users" of the data are rotated regularly. A judicious balance needs to be struck between significant improvements in data and analysis models, instability and incontinuity.

2. Use

It should go without saying that data needs to be properly interpreted, balanced by professional experience and judgment, and properly employed in the evaluation and/or crafting of policies and strategies. Failure in any of these areas makes even the best data of marginal value, and prevents the necessary blending of art and science.

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### 3. Impact on the Conflict

During the "Big War," 1965-1969, there were four pillars supporting the US (and a lesser extent the GVN) strategy:

- Air War in the North and against the Ho Chi Minh Trail (controlled by Washington and conducted by PACOM).
- Ground War in RVN, supported by air in country and in the Laotian Panhandle, etc. (basically planned and conducted by MACV with "assistance" from US ambassadors).
- Pacification, territorial and population security and control, plus "nation building" (nominally controlled by GVN, but US aid and advice increasingly predominated, especially after CORDS was established).
- Negotiations (tightly controlled in Washington).

It has been charged, with some justification, that these four pillars were too loosely related and coordinated. That issue will be examined in other chapters of this volume; this section concentrates on the relative worth of the Measures of Progress to each of the strategic tools. Individually and collectively they were designed to influence the elementary calculus of the conflict -- the will and capability of the various antagonists to persist.

#### a. Air War Over DRV (and the Ho Chi Minh Trail)

This was the most expensive, and probably the most controversial, of the four pillars. Mountains of statistics were deployed by those arguing for and against the bombing and/or the political constraints imposed on it. Maxwell Taylor listed three objectives for the initial bombing campaign:<sup>28/</sup> 1) raise the morale of the South Vietnamese, 2) impede the flow of men and supplies to the south, and 3) punish the DRV for its aggression against RVN. The bombing fell short on all three counts. Later the bombing -- and the unilateral halts -- were considered as a negotiating "blue chip." With exceptions on both sides, the debate about the (in)effectiveness of the air war broke into civilian and military teams.



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All of the estimates of supply flows from the DRV were uncertain, and least certain were the amounts estimated to have been destroyed by air strikes. Nonetheless, extensive analysis 29/ suggests the following:

- The VC/PAVN probably received about 70% of their supplies for operations in the RVN from sources inside and adjacent to South Vietnam. About 15% of their supplies were estimated to have come from the DRV over the Ho Chi Minh trail through Laos, target of the USAF's primary air interdiction effort.
- About one-third of all supplies shipped into Southern Laos were estimated to have made it into RVN through 1970. The balance were considered to have been destroyed by US air strikes, consumed in transit, or stockpiled in Laos. After 1970, the US probably could have done better by utilizing the truck-killing C-130 gunship, which had proven very effective at night, but the DRV still managed to move sufficient supplies and manpower south to keep the war going and to launch the Easter Offensive in 1972.
- Apparently there were ample quantities of supplies to ship south, because the estimated flow of imports into the DRV (from the USSR and PRC) was 20 times the size of the estimated shipments from the DRV into the Laotian sanctuaries.

There were more than 1.5 million sorties flown in the out-of-country interdiction air campaign, but those air strikes did not choke off VC/NVA combat activity in the South. In addition, the air strikes on the DRV did not impose a meaningful cost on the North Vietnamese. Figure 15-4 suggests that the air operations probably did not impose critical materiel costs on North Vietnam, since its allies paid for most of the resources destroyed. The foreign aid received by North Vietnam from its allies during the 1967-69 was two or three times as large as the costs of keeping its forces in RVN, Cambodia and Laos supplied and replacing the damage in the DRV caused by US bombing attacks.30/

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<u>COSTS</u>	(\$ Millions)		
	Calendar Year		
	1967	1968	1969
<u>Costs of Supplies Shipped to:</u> <u>a/</u>			
Northern Laos	53	61	58
Southern Laos	45	63	60
Total	98	124	118
<u>Costs of Trucks Destroyed:</u> <u>b/</u>			
Northern Laos	1	1	3
Southern Laos	6	44	38
Total	7	45	41
<u>Costs of Supplies, Equipment, and</u> <u>Industry Destroyed in North</u> <u>Vietnam:</u> <u>c/</u>	139	85	-
<u>Costs of Air Defense in North Vietnam:</u> <u>d/</u>	235	122	83
<u>Total Costs</u>	479	376	242
<u>AID</u>			
<u>Total Foreign Aid To North Vietnam:</u> <u>d/</u>			
Economic	380	480	470
Military	650	395	220
<u>Total Aid</u>	1,030	875	690
<u>COMPARISONS</u>			
Total Costs as % of Foreign Aid	46%	43%	35%
Total Costs as % of Military Aid	74%	95%	110%
<hr/>			
<u>a/</u>	Computed from CIA estimates of supply shipments and estimated costs per ton of supplies of \$1,300 for Northern Laos and \$1,100 for Southern Laos.		
<u>b/</u>	Computed from DIA estimates of truck attrition and estimated cost of \$6,000 per vehicle.		
<u>c/</u>	OASD/SA estimates, based on several earlier studies.		
<u>d/</u>	CIA/DIA estimates.		

SOURCE: "Southeast Asia Tactical Aircraft Operations", Southeast Asia Analysis Report, June-July 1970, p. 29.

Figure 15-4. Comparison of Foreign Aid to DRV and Cost of Supplying VC/NVA Forces

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The results indicate that Secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara was correct when he stated in November 1966 that:

A substantial air interdiction campaign is clearly necessary and worthwhile. . . . But at the scale we are now operating, I believe our bombing is yielding very small marginal returns, not worth the cost in pilot lives and aircraft.31/

The bottom line of the air war during this period was that it had little impact on the war. In terms of resource allocation the US spent more on the air campaign in the north than on other nominal efforts (or pillars). It proved to be the least cost-effective of them all.32/

### b. The Ground War

The dominant thrust of US/RVNAF combat forces was to destroy the VC/PAVN military forces in RVN by grinding them down. General Westmoreland stated that "it was, in essence, a war of attrition."33/ "Attrit, by year's end, VC and North Vietnamese forces at a rate as high as their capability to put men into the field," 34/ became the annual objective for General Westmoreland's subordinate commanders. It became apparent as early as 1966 that the attrition strategy was in trouble. Secretary of Defense McNamara made the following observations in November 1966.

. . . if MACV estimates of enemy strength are correct, we have not been able to attrit the enemy forces fast enough to break down their morale and more U.S. forces are unlikely to do so for the foreseeable future. . . .35/

. . . the data suggest that we have no prospects of attriting the enemy force at a rate equal to or greater than his capability to infiltrate and recruit, and this will be true at either the 470,000 U.S. personnel level or 570,000.36/

If we assume that the estimates of enemy strength are accurate, the ratio of total friendly to total enemy strength has only increased from 3.5 to 4.0 to 1 since the end of 1965. Under the circumstances it does not appear that we have the favorable leverage required to achieve decisive attrition by introducing more forces.37/

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The communist forces survived because the DRV had enough manpower and the will to rebuild the VC/PAVN units after each offensive. Furthermore, the VC/PAVN were able to control their own casualty rates to a great extent by controlling the number, size and intensity of combat engagements, and therefore they could limit their losses to what they could afford.<sup>38/</sup>

After the Tet Offensive in 1968, subsequent analysis revealed that the initiative had shifted somewhat to the US and allies. The US and allies had gained considerable control over both their own combat deaths and those of communists, although the latter's ability to retain control over fluctuations in their own deaths remained high.<sup>39/</sup>

The attrition strategy failed. And although the US and allies could not defeat the VC/PAVN forces (since to a large extent they controlled their own casualties), the enemy on the other hand failed in their attempts to win by all-out offensives in 1968 and 1972. The heavy losses suffered during those two offensives forced the DRV to retreat to a protracted war strategy and, particularly in 1972, to negotiate.

### c. Pacification

In terms of resource allocation, the war was first an air war, second an attrition campaign and last one of Pacification. The latter, probably the most effective program of the lot, got the least funding.

Pacification (the subject is treated in detail in Chapter 5 of Volume V) had been successful, notwithstanding the relatively small amount of resources made available to it. There was widespread agreement that the GVN exercised a predominant influence over the vast majority of the South Vietnamese people, although the Hamlet Evaluation System (HES) and other data did reflect some setbacks during the heavy fighting of 1972.

Great progress was made in gaining influence and control of the South Vietnamese countryside. It is apparent that the process of providing GVN security for the population took hold gradually and made great strides in 1969 and 1970. Most of those gains held through the intense fighting of 1972. Much of the credit for this probably belongs to

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the pacification program. It undoubtedly benefited from the upgrading of territorial forces, RF/PF, and RVNAF regular forces, who furnished a critical shield for the program, but it seems clear that without a pacification program the gains would not have been anywhere near as great. After years of criticism of the HES results, it is interesting to read (in 1974) accounts of the situation in South Vietnam which cite the strong GVN influence and control of the countryside.40/

The security improvement in the countryside permitted other important developments. Food production rose dramatically, reducing South Vietnam's reliance on rice imports and bringing new prosperity to the farmers. The improved security also permitted the massive 1970-73 land reform effort, which distributed 2.5 million acres of land to 800,000 tenant farmer families.41/

### d. Negotiations

During President Johnson's Administration, the hope for ending the war depended upon being successful on the battlefield and attaining pacification in the countryside -- the first three pillars. Achieving a position of military strength became a US prerequisite for negotiations. This strategy suffered from two disabilities:

- the nature of guerrilla warfare; and
- the asymmetry in the definition of what constituted acceptable losses.

As a result, US/allies military successes (from 1965-1968) could not be translated into permanent political advantage.

As a venture in strategic persuasion, the early bombing of the DRV did not work. The costly, limited and graduated air attacks met with little success. The symbolic rationale for bombing halts backfired and the DRV used negotiations as a means to get the bombing stopped. Only when President Nixon decided to go with a heavy bombardment of Hanoi/Haiphong -- with some aircraft employing the new "smart" bombs -- in December 1972, did US airpower prove its effectiveness in getting the DRV to consider negotiating in earnest.42/

President Nixon recognized that a military solution to the war for US and allied forces was not available; therefore he set about to attain a better balance of forces in the conflict, create a stalemate on the battlefield, cause the DRV to be isolated from their communist benefactors (through "detente" diplomacy with the USSR and PRC), and arrive at a political solution in the negotiations.

G. SUMMARY ANALYSIS

1. Statistics

The US committed its combat forces to battle in 1965. Eight years later, at the end of 1972, after one final surge of bombing, they were gone and a "cease-fire" agreement was signed with the DRV in January 1973. All US ground, air and naval forces were out of the conflict, and so were virtually all the military advisors.

The South Vietnamese forces appeared to be doing a good job. They had repulsed the 1972 Easter offensive without the help of US ground forces, but with the aid of heavy American air and logistics support. On the other hand, they had not moved forcefully to solve their critical problem of poor leadership. Without improved leadership, they were not able to improve their training, clean out their staffs, and fill their combat units to full strength. Moreover, the departure of US and South Korean forces left the anticommunist side weaker than before the Paris peace agreements.

Pacification had been successful. There was widespread evidence and agreement that the GVN exercised a predominant influence over the vast majority of South Vietnamese people.

PAVN troops and some of the VC infrastructure were still intact and in place, despite the tremendous allocation of allied resources, effort, and lives to the strategy of attrition. At the end of 1972 the VC/PAVN forces were battered, to be sure, but they were still in the fight

and they had improved their ability to wage large-scale conventional warfare. Moreover, the cease-fire agreement was signed in January, which traditionally ushered in the peak combat effort of the year. Although it was not recognized at the time, the military balance was starting to shift into their favor.43/

The final collapse of 1975 happened with a speed that startled the world, including the victors, the vanquished, the American people, and their leaders. How could it have happened so fast? Some clues from the so-called cease-fire period are worth examining.

First, there never was a cease-fire. Everyone recognized that some fighting continued but not many in Washington realized how intense the fighting was -- until October 1974, near the end. Essentially, this sorry state of affairs resulted from poor reporting of South Vietnamese casualties.44/

An important statistic, "friendly" battle deaths, was the single best measure of the intensity of combat.45/ After the peace agreement the South Vietnamese were the only "friendly" troops remaining in action, so their battle deaths became the measure of combat intensity.

The figures for RVNAF combat deaths reported to Washington indicated that combat during 1974 was 75 percent below the 1972 level. This was reported to congressional committees as evidence that the peace agreement was having a beneficial effect. This in turn, served as the rationale for slashing aid to South Vietnamese forces during the summer of 1974.

The problem was that the official GVN figures for battle deaths turned out to be twice as high as the figures reported to Washington in the operational messages. With the large changeover of US personnel after the cease-fire agreement, the RVNAF casualty-reporting system slipped back into a reliance on daily and weekly operational reports, which didn't pick up the late RVNAF reports -- and half of the battle deaths were reported late.46/ Thus, for the RVNAF the war in 1973 was only 30 percent less intense than in 1972, the worst year for casualties that the RVNAF ever had.47/

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In short, the war during the supposed cease-fire period continued on for the RVNAF at a level of intensity equivalent to their losses during 1968, the year of the Tet offensive. The RVNAF took more casualties during 1974 than it did in any prior year except 1972. By December 1974 the South Vietnamese Army was a badly battered force. The effects of the beating showed in the pacification statistics, as HES ratings slipped back once again to levels existing in 1969.<sup>48/</sup>

The DRV's forces, on the other hand, were getting stronger. They moved their logistics support into areas of South Vietnam which they controlled and protected with improved antiaircraft defenses. They built roads, bridges, and pipelines, and introduced several thousand more troops. By the end of 1974, they were in the strongest position they had ever enjoyed.

Analysts were slow in coming up with meaningful assessments based on measures of progress. For example, they failed to identify the following in timely fashion:

- The ineffectiveness of the early (1965-68) air war in the north and the interdiction of the NVA's supply lines.
- The most cost-effective forces and programs (i.e., territorial forces, Chieu Hoi defector program, land reform, etc.).
- The ineffectiveness of the US/RVNAF attrition strategy in accomplishing its desired goal (i.e., attriting the enemy at a rate equal or greater than his ability to infiltrate and recruit new troops).
- The increased capabilities and strength of the DRV's forces after the Paris cease-fire agreements of 1973.

Notwithstanding the above, the measures of progress were successful in identifying the following basic patterns of the conflict:

- The intensity or surges of combat in each year - from an accurate statistic (friendly combat casualties).
- The annual cycle of combat - heaviest combat during 1st half of the year (dry season).



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- Locations of heaviest fighting - intense combat in northern provinces and the three southernmost provinces.

### 2. Difficulties in Measuring Progress

In a combat situation the commander's attention is directed toward determining the enemy's intentions -- his strategy and tactics. Concomitantly, the commander is most anxious as to the status of his own units' operations: What progress has been made? In a conventional war, such as the two World Wars and the Korean conflict, two factors were used to monitor the progress of a campaign:

- The state of the forces on each side; and
- Location of the front lines and changes thereto.

The Vietnam War was not a conventional war. It was a struggle to influence the population in thousands of villages, a war that was fragmented to the extent that there were few large battles -- rather, there were thousands of actions per month carried out by the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese forces at company level or lower. The French, having engaged in a similar conflict in the same areas a generation earlier, coined the phrase "wars without fronts".

This helps to explain why the Vietnam War was so difficult to grasp, why the US leadership and public found it so hard to judge real progress and detect important trends and changes. The war was different. The US, eminently prepared to cope with a conventional war, was simply not ready for a war without fronts.

US commanders and analysts needed to have a substitute for the front line in the Vietnam conflict in order to understand the war and how it was going. The substitute turned out to be a systematic, quantitative analysis of the hundreds, even thousands, of events occurring in many parts of Vietnam every day. Any given action was seldom important by itself, and at first, no patterns were seen. Analysis, however, revealed persistent patterns and cycles. From these, analysts (even those in Washington) were able to monitor the war with surprising precision by examining trends over

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time and patterns in forces, military operations and activities, casualties, security of the population, and economic welfare of the population. That analytic effort generally fell into the following three categories:

- Status of forces,
- Status of operations, and
- Status of the population.

Several factors which impacted on the level, degree and validity of analytic efforts were:

- Whether the statistics from the Vietnam war were good enough to analyze.
- Whether data reporting of the war was adequate enough to serve the system,
- Whether analytical models could be modified to fit the multi-variable Vietnam situation.
- Whether any meaning at all could be derived from the masses of data collected.

The quantification of the war has been criticized as being excessive and largely misleading--the body count is a favorite example used to support this criticism. Quantification may indeed have been overdone, but analysis of the key issues certainly was not. Much stress was placed on things like the body count, and this focus did create incentive systems all of their own. But there is a difference between analysis and quantification according to old-style rules of thumb. The problem was that quantification became a huge effort, but analysis remained a small one. This is unfortunate because those limited analytic efforts that were undertaken yielded much useful insight into the war and into the prospects for achieving US objectives, given the way the war was being fought.

Don Oberdorfer, noted reporter and author, had the following caustic but sage observation with respect to measures of progress during the Vietnam War and their impact on possible future conflicts:

The practice of assigning definite numbers to pure guesses--such as Communist strength figures, Communist

casualty estimates and hamlet security evaluations--has been among the greatest absurdities of a peculiar war. Originally intended to place the conduct of the war on a "scientific" and thus manageable basis and to enhance public confidence, the practice ultimately consumed vast amounts of time and energy, led to misconceptions and erroneous conclusions about the war and was a major factor in the erosion of public confidence. Nevertheless, the "numbers game" may be now so deeply imbedded in military, press and public thinking that it will persist in future military conflicts.49/

H. INSIGHTS

The most pernicious measure of progress in Vietnam was the body count, not because casualty statistics are of themselves wrong or distasteful but because of the use made of the statistics. The perception of success in a given engagement in the Vietnam War usually derived from the body count, later augmented by the captured weapons count. Officers' efficiency reports and the allocation of combat support assets were strongly influenced in many organizations by relative standings in racking up a high body count. The often-warped interest in body count provided an inducement for countless tactical unit commanders to strive for a big kill (whether legitimate or feigned) in preference to providing security for a hamlet or village.

In many cases the statistics used as measures of progress in Indochina were very misleading and had no bearing whatever on actual progress; for example:

- Unit days in the field and numbers of patrols dispatched became ends in themselves and as important as results achieved.
- The enormous tonnages of bombs dropped became goals to be equalled or exceeded, yet about 75% of the aircraft sorties flown were not closely linked to ground combat but rather to the interdiction effort which, itself, generated questionable statistics.
- The preponderance of artillery fires (except for Tet '68 and other major engagements) were unobserved fires, adding to the

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"rounds expended" statistic and often increasing the number of disaffected or refugee South Vietnamese.

"Killed by Air" (KBA) statistics were particularly inaccurate and they became subject to frequent challenge by the media to the degree that CG7th Air Force General Momyer stopped their use.

So much unnecessary data were collected that manual and computer systems were nearly swamped, and much of the effort was self-generated by higher military commands, including the JCS, in the search for useful measures.

The Hamlet Evaluation System (HES), initiated in 1967, replaced the biased, inaccurate, exaggerated, and often self-serving Joint GVN-US reporting system; HES contained some inaccuracies, but the US advisors had the final word, and higher echelons could not make changes in the advisors' evaluations of hamlet security. As a consequence, the HES system provided very good data on trends and was generally considered to have been the most effective system that could have been implemented.

### I. LESSONS

In warfare, comparative statistics play an important role in the planning, conduct, and analysis of battles; those statistics are a valid and necessary tool, but the criteria for measurement must be meaningful, the reporting system must be inspected, supervised and disciplined, and the statistics must not be permitted to become ends in themselves. Casualty statistics, unfortunately known as body count in Vietnam, will continue to be an analytical device, but care should be exercised in how and where these statistics are presented.

In any future conflict situation, regardless of the intensity and/or scope, US leaders and commanders, at all levels, will continue to have a need to know the status of progress being made by their forces in combat. Furthermore, the advent of scientific management techniques and increased use of computers in data collection and analysis by the DOD will make quantitative analysis of that data a matter of course. Therefore, it is incumbent on the US military establishment to analyze the full spectrum of

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possible conflict situations to determine in advance the measures of progress which would be most useful to future decision makers.

Civilian leaders and military commanders should remember that combat data collection, compilation, and analysis need to be properly interpreted, balanced by professional experience and judgment, and properly employed in the evaluation and crafting of policies and strategies. A failure in any of those areas would make even the best data of marginal value, and prevent the necessary blending of art and science.

CHAPTER 15 ENDNOTES

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2. Douglas Kinnard, The War Managers (Hanover, N.H.: Univ. Press of New England, 1977), p. 75.
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41. Ibid.
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44. Ibid., p. 847; Colonel Richard A. Mahon, US Army Attache Intelligence Report, Assessment of ARVN: Intelligence Report, Saigon, RVN, July 5, 1974, pp. 1-6.
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CHAPTER 16  
OPERATIONAL AND TECHNICAL INNOVATIONS

Some see the use of technology by the US in Vietnam as evidence of a national style, being the leading technological country brought forth the natural American reaction to look for a technological answer to the problem of Vietnam.

Brigadier W. F. K. Thompson  
Royal United Services Institute  
February 12, 1969 1/

On balance, technology hurt the US effort in Vietnam more than it helped.

Ambassador Robert Komer, in  
The Lessons of Vietnam, 1977 2/

A. INTRODUCTION

The Vietnam War served as a great technological proving ground where the US and the Soviet Union tested their latest weaponry and techniques. Throughout the conflict the US relied heavily on advancements in technology as a supplement and substitute for manpower. This chapter examines US and enemy tactical and material innovations and the extent to which these innovations helped or hindered US and allied efforts during the war.

B. THE ORIGINS OF TECHNOLOGICAL SUPPORT IN RVN 3/

The initial efforts to provide technology assistance to Southeast Asia came when Project Agile was established in the Advanced Research Projects Agency (ARPA) in 1961 with the task of undertaking RDT&E activities in support of the combat requirements of indigenous forces in Asia. That initial support was provided by ARPA in consonance with ARPA's charter of pursuing promising R&D efforts in areas not receiving attention from other DOD R&D elements.

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## 1. Field Units

Research and Development field units (RDFU's) were established by ARPA in both Vietnam (RDFU-V) and Thailand (RDFU-T). The RDFU's were small (less than 20 staff members) but provided excellent communications and coordination between the host country's RDT&E requirements and ARPA.

In mid-1962 the Joint Operational Evaluation Group-Vietnam (JOEG-V) was established. RDFU-V became a component of JOEG-V. In March 1964, as military involvement began increasing, JOEG-V was replaced by the Joint Research and Test Activity (JRATA). JRATA was tasked to coordinate the in-country R&D activities of the Services and ARPA. These organizations now included RDFU-V, the Air Force Test Unit-Vietnam (AFTU-V), the Army Concept Team in Vietnam (ACTIV) and the Navy Research and Development Unit-Vietnam (NRDU-V).

In 1965, in OSD (DDR&E), the PROVOST Program was instituted (Priority Research Objectives, Vietnam Operational Support). The PROVOST Program had as its purpose the reorientation of RDT&E in order to make available the materiel and concepts required to carry out the US mission in Vietnam with the introduction of large US forces. PROVOST provided the mechanism for providing high priorities in Southeast Asia-oriented R&D efforts. In November 1966, JRATA was abolished, the Service R&D Units were returned to their respective Services and RDFU-V was assigned to MACV J-3 for administrative purposes.

## 2. DDR&E

In 1966, the Southeast Asia Matters Office (SEAM) was formed in DDR&E. That was the only office in DDR&E oriented specifically toward meeting the requirements of R&D for Southeast Asia. The director of SEAM chaired the PROVOST Steering Group. The value of the PROVOST Steering Group in coordinating the Service components and ARPA was soon evident. To gain assistance in PROVOST funding, the Group was expanded to include representatives of the Assistant Secretaries of Defense (Installations and Logistics, and Systems and Analysis). The PROVOST Steering Group continued expanding to take advantage of the many organizations willing and able

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to offer RDT&E assistance for Vietnam through 1968, when it included representation from OSD, DDR&E, ARPA, the Services, JCS, AEC, NASA, CIA and the Department of Agriculture.

In 1966, the Office of the Military Assistance Command Science Advisor (MACSA) was established, and later was given administrative control of RDFU-V. The RDT&E Service components remained with their respective Services.

In an effort to achieve better RDT&E coordination in-country in mid-1967, but appreciating the Services' insistence in retaining Service control of the R&D efforts, MACSA instituted periodic meetings of all RDT&E organizations in Vietnam. Those meetings were particularly useful for the coordination of the myriad of development items that appeared in Vietnam. The coordination within the R&D elements was particularly helpful when in the fall of 1967 COMUSMACV appointed MACSA to head Project ARMORROCCO (Artillery, Mortar, Rocket Counter Efforts). ARMORROCCO was an effort to make use of available technology to counter the extremely heavy artillery, rocket and mortar fire being received in I Corps near the DMZ.

### 3. The Services and R&D

The military services established individual systems to receive and respond to new operational requirements from Vietnam. The Army system, Expedited Non-Standard Urgent Requirement Equipment (ENSURE) was a quick reaction capability (QRC) system established in 1966. Through the end of the conflict, 389 requirements were submitted. The Air Force system, Southeast Asia Operational Requirements (SEAOR), also established a quick reaction capability in 1966. The Navy established a dual system in 1966: one its own PROVOST system and the other, which tied in all of its laboratories through NRDU-V, the Vietnamese Laboratory Assistance Program (VLAP). Through these Navy quick reaction programs, 587 requirements were received. In 1968, the Marine Corps established its quick reaction capability, Special Procedure for Expediting Equipment Development (SPEED). Fifty-one SPEED requirements were submitted. Many of these quick reaction requirements were of a single-use hardware orientation typified by some of the SPEED requests: 1 KW Xenon Searchlight, Heavy Duty Chain Saws, Helicopter

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Hook Extension Pendant, Manpack Loudspeaker System and Tank Air Cleaner Shields.

All too often the QRC approach was required to bypass the lethargic Service supply and development systems and the business-as-usual attitude of those not physically located in Vietnam.

#### 4. MACV Significant Program Areas

Having recognized the existence of significant problem areas occurring in the Vietnam war that might be amenable to technological solutions, in June 1967 the Commander-in-Chief Pacific (CINCPAC) requested that the Commander United States Military Assistance Command Vietnam (COMUSMACV) submit a semi-annual report of these problem areas. The first of these "MACV Significant Problem Areas" Reports was submitted on 7 August 1967, the next in November 1967, thereafter semi-annually with the last report submitted in May 1972. Copies of these MACV reports were forwarded by CINCPAC directly to the JCS, the Service departments and DDR&E as well as being incorporated in the "PACOM Significant R&D Problem Areas".

In preparing the MACV Significant Problem Areas Report, the MACV J-3 received input from all Service component and Corps Commanders as well as MACV staff elements including the Science Advisor. With the Services' RDT&E Units in Vietnam (as well as the ARPA Field units) assisting in the preparation and staffing of the Service component inputs, the MACV Report truly reflected the totality of perceived "significant" requirements believed amenable to technological solution. Every effort was made to insure that the report reflected only "significant" problem areas although, as the years passed with practically no solutions to most of these significant problems, an occasional minor technological problem would find its way into the report, usually to be purged shortly thereafter.

To ensure that the report reflected not only the significance of a problem but some precedence for that problem's relative importance, a system of priority grouping was established. The criteria for these priorities were:

##### Priority Group I

- o Contributes significantly to reducing the number of casualties experienced by Free World Forces.

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- Stresses the lack of an urgently needed capability.
- Degrades the overall battle posture of friendly forces.

### Priority Group II

- A former Priority I item for which a partial solution has been found and for which extensive research development effort is continuing.
- Accents the need for improvement of existing critical capability.
- Has an adverse effect on general military operations, including the safety aspects of these operations.
- Stresses the need for a capability to discourage enemy aggression.

### Priority Group III

- Emphasizes the lack of a capability required by a specific unit or for a specific geographical area.
- Discloses the need for refining an existing capability.
- Reveals a requirement for a capability to perform a task not directly associated with tactical operations.

Later, as Vietnamization efforts began, additional criteria were included as follows:

### Priority Group I

- Delays the RVN in assuming responsibility for conducting a major aspect of the war.

### Priority Group II

- Could delay providing the RVN with the required capability.

Note: See Appendix A for selected problem areas.

### 5. The R&D Cycle and Cooperation

The routine R&D cycle in DOD required approximately ten years as a minimum between Program 6.3 (Engineering Development) and I.O.C. (Initial Operational Capability) when the equipment is in the "hands of the troops." This length of time is to be expected with the normal testing, requirement/funding/priority justifications, and approval/production lead time. In addition there exists a very strong bureaucratic inertia that says "go slow, we've been burned too many times before." Thus to the R&D careerist,

the sudden requirement for QRC for Vietnam came as a shock. The inertia was sometimes not easily overcome and did cause problems in quick reaction.

Another problem area, admitted or not, was the strong resentment and distrust on the part of some in the Services, particularly some senior officers, toward ARPA, SEAM, MACSA, VLAP or any other group of essentially "civilian experts" on military matters. Some of this resentment and distrust was probably deserved. There were gadgeteers and there were those who felt totally "above" the military mission, or of the problems confronting the military in the field. Such individuals appear not to have been in the majority, however. Most were dedicated and competent. Ultimately, through success, perseverance and example, this civilian-military coordination for Vietnam began to function effectively.

### C. AIRMOBILE INNOVATIONS

#### 1. General

It is generally agreed that the helicopter had the most important impact on the conduct of ground combat in the Vietnam War. It added that extra dimension, the aerial dimension, to the battle gameplay. The French and the South Vietnamese had made limited use of airborne and helicopter units previously; however, the nature and extent of US airmobile support for ground combat in Vietnam was something new on the battlefield: much good, some bad.

Reaction to the enemy was quicker with the use of helicopters. A commander could shift his forces to a decisive area on short notice, free of the limiting factors of terrain, and sometimes weather. He could arrive unfatigued and prepared, attack the enemy's position with helicopter gunships, observe the battle area by means of heliborne reconnaissance, and direct the operation from his command and control helicopter. Ultimately, in the interest of speed and conservation of the forces, helicopters were used for the movement of most tactical equipment and troops.

2. Background

US helicopters had been used in combat during the Korean War as medevac transports and for moving light cargo among depots in rear areas. The Marine Corps experimented with helicopters in tactical exercises and pioneered the use of vertical envelopment in support of amphibious warfare. HRS-1 helicopters were used in Korea in September 1951 in a night deployment of a division reserve company, and in 1952 a regiment of the 1st Marine Division was supported logistically (less ammunition) by helicopter. Companies and even battalions were being routinely deployed by helicopter. 4/

In 1961, President Kennedy asked his military advisor, General Maxwell D. Taylor, to survey the military situation in South Vietnam. As a result of General Taylor's recommendations, President Kennedy ordered US Army aviation assets and other types of combat support units to South Vietnam. 5/

In April 1962, Secretary of Defense McNamara directed the US Army to study land warfare mobility. McNamara felt that tactical effectiveness would be aided immeasurably by the use of air vehicles and that purchase of air items was more cost effective than continued expenditures for predominantly ground support. 6/

The US Army Tactical Mobility Requirements Board chaired by General Howze was convened as a result of McNamara's order. Based on recommendations of the Howze Board, the Secretary of Defense ordered the organization, training and testing of the 11th Air Assault Division and the 10th Air Transport Brigade during 1963. Additionally, the 11th was ordered to form, train and equip six airmobile companies (assault helicopters) for duty in Vietnam.

The airmobile concept was new to the US Army. Tactical operations were multifaceted and closely integrated, involving:

- Transporting troops by helicopter,
- Providing aerial fire support to the flights enroute to combat as well to the troops helilanded and in contact with the enemy,
- Conducting aerial reconnaissance of the battlefield,
- Helilifting artillery to support the battle, and
- Providing command and control assets.

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With its inherent mobility, the airmobile division could exert control over a wide area with speed, flexibility and independence from ground obstacles. A high tempo of maneuver resulted, enhancing economy of force operations while facilitating mass when desired.

In August 1965, the 1st Cavalry Division (Airmobile) was formed from the assets of the 11th and deployed to Vietnam. In the meantime, from 1962 until the major buildup of US forces in 1965, Army aviation units in RVN struggled to respond to heavy airmobile lift requests during a period of quantum enemy growth and limited ARVN success.

### 3. Early Initiatives

#### a. The Tactics

Airmobile assault tactics were refined during the period 1962-1965, when Army helicopter companies were operating in RVN in direct support of ARVN troops. The typical assault sequence which evolved has since proved to be viable, at least for operations in a counterinsurgency environment:

- Alert the Assault Helicopter Company (one day before opn);
- Coordinate with supported unit;
- Conduct physical or map reconnaissance of Pickup Zone (PZ) and Landing Zone (LZ);
- Determine checkpoints, flight routes, aircraft altitudes, and formations;
- Develop or acquire intelligence data, particularly AA;
- Reconnoiter and/or prepare LZ with gunship fire teams one to five minutes before transport helicopters arrive; engage targets at maximum range; and
- Exercise operational control by gunship team leader enroute and during landing; pass op con to ground commander when troops are dismounted.

#### b. Resulting Innovations

The employment of airmobile units in combat yielded some early innovations. Eagle Flight techniques and low level cargo extraction from fixed-wing aircraft were two important developments (See Figure 16-1).



EAGLE FLIGHT

COMPOSITION

- 5-7 TROOP TRANSPORT HELICOPTERS
- 2-5 HELICOPTER GUNSHIPS
- 1 COMMAND AND CONTROL HELICOPTER GUNSHIP WITH AVIATION EAGLE FLIGHT COMMANDER AND ARVN TROOP COMMANDER ON BOARD

MISSION

- LOCATE AND ENGAGE THE ENEMY
- PURSUE AND ATTACK AN ENEMY FLEEING A LARGER FRIENDLY FORCE
- ENGAGE AN ENEMY FOUND AND FIXED BY OTHER FRIENDLY FORCES 7/

ADVANTAGES

- IMMEDIATELY READY FOR ACTION
- TYPICAL AIRMOBILE PLANNING TIME REDUCED TO A MINIMUM BECAUSE FORCE WAS SMALL AND TROOPS WERE TRAINED AND ACCUSTOMED TO AIRMOBILE ASSAULTS

LOW-LEVEL CARGO EXTRACTION

- HIGH WING, TWIN RADIAL ENGINE, (US ARMY AIRBORNE) TROOP TRANSPORT CAPABLE OF CARRYING 32 PASSENGERS OR 5,000 LBS PAYLOAD
- SHORT TAKE OFF AND LANDING CAPABILITIES PARTICULARLY APPROPRIATE FOR SUPPORT OF US ADVISORY EFFORT IN VIETNAM
- MAJOR INNOVATION USEFUL IN REDUCING EXPOSURE TO HOSTILE FIRE WAS INTRODUCTION AND USE OF LOW-LEVEL CARGO EXTRACTION METHOD AS A CARGO DELIVERY TECHNIQUE WHEN A LANDING WAS IMPOSSIBLE OR INOPPORTUNE 8/

Figure 16-1. Early Airmobile Developments

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### 4. US Ground Forces Arrive in Vietnam

In May 1965, US conventional combat units were deployed to Vietnam for the first time, joining the US advisors and aviation personnel already there. The first US Army troop unit to arrive was the 173d Airborne Brigade. In June 1965, the brigade carried out an airmobile assault using 27 troop transport helicopters. This was the beginning of large-scale airmobile operations, a scale which would increase until the early 1970s, when the US presence diminished.

### 5. Subsequent Airmobile Innovations

#### a. Intelligence

Helicopters were used for the first time for the insertion, support and extraction of Long-Range Reconnaissance Patrols (LRRPs) in Vietnam. LRRP missions often provided commanders valuable information and warning of enemy activity on the periphery of their areas of operation (AO). 9/

Helicopters were also utilized in body snatch missions aimed at the capture of enemy personnel. 10/ The enemy was elusive, and both the North Vietnamese and Viet Cong were skilled in avoiding capture, but the body snatch technique produced some positive results.

#### b. Operations

Technical innovations resulted from the development of firebases, the use of night operations and artillery raids in support of airmobile combat.

#### 1) Firebases

Areas selected for artillery firebases were reconnoited and then secured by airmobile assault. Troop transport helicopters were used for insertion of infantry security units, engineers, troops, bulldozers, and other equipment and artillery. LZs were improved or constructed using explosives or portable engineer equipment, depending on the nature of the terrain selected. It was imperative that US and ARVN forces remain within the effective range of their direct support field artillery so that the enemy could be quickly upstaged by observed artillery fire

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during any kind of weather. Therefore, friendly artillery moved often to support the mobile warfare gameplan.

### 2) Night Operations

Operational innovations on night airmobile warfare resulted from new applications of existing technology. The goal was the same as in the daylight--to find the enemy. At night, from the aerial point of view, this meant the use of illumination as well as nonillumination methods. Helicopter gunship night operations employed several techniques to illuminate the enemy:

- aircraft landing lights,
- xenon searchlights,
- artillery flares,
- infrared lights, and
- visible lights.

The Iroquois Night Fighter and Night Tracker, the INFANT system, was a non-illuminated aerial observation device used with a modicum of success. The enemy was observed by a low light level television mounted on a helicopter gunship. The INFANT system was not completely successful in Vietnam, and it needs better equipment and further definition of the concept for its employment. 11/

### 3) Artillery Raids

This tactic was intended to strike at the enemy while he believed he was outside US artillery range. A field artillery battery would be moved deep into suspected enemy territory and fire prepared concentrations on targets, based on intelligence reports. Aerial Rocket Artillery (ARA) batteries of 12-rocket-carrying helicopter gunships were ideal for such raids. It should be noted that the employment of any non-observed artillery fires ran the risk of causing casualties among indigenous civilians and while the tactic of artillery raids of this nature is worth developing the actual employment of such fires requires good intelligence and careful restraint.

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### 4) Airmobile Combat

The aerial alternative was never so technically developed or so widely available or applicable to a combat situation before Vietnam. US commanders were able to exploit the aerial innovations to the fullest extent possible by transporting, reinforcing, displacing or withdrawing forces during battle. In addition, all available fire support for the battle could be controlled by the airmobile task force commander, usually from a command and control aircraft. Figure 16-2 describes the major airmobile combat operational innovations as well as some of the problems encountered. 12/

### 5) Rescue Operations

The helicopter played an important role in evacuating US and ARVN battlefield casualties and downed airmen. Not only were helicopters able to land in restricted areas, but transport helicopters equipped with spring-loaded "forest penetrators" could hover over dense jungle areas and hoist men out as well. Nearly all US and ARVN battlefield casualties were helilifted to rear areas for medical treatment and, of the wounded who reached medical facilities, about 97.5 percent survived. 13/ In addition, more than half of the downed airmen in Indochina were recovered. 14/ Rescue missions were often carried out in the face of heavy enemy fire, however, the Americans placed high priority on the rescue of downed aircrew which was naturally a morale booster for the crews themselves.

By 1969, there were 116 field-army-level helicopter ambulances in Vietnam contained in two companies and 11 separate detachments. 15/

### c. Logistics

There were four innovations in the airmobile logistics field which directly impacted on the support and conservation of the force:

- Aircraft Recovery,
- USNS Corpus Christi Bay (Repair Ship),
- Fuel Storage Containers, and
- Aerial Cargo Ships.

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OPERATION	DESCRIPTION	PROBLEMS
JITTERBUG & SEAL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>LIGHT OBSERVATION HELICOPTERS (LOH) WITH AIRBORNE PERSONNEL DETECTORS LOCATE ENEMY AND DISPENSE TEAR GAS AGENTS.</li> <li>LIGHT FIRE TEAM HELICOPTER GUNSHIPS MAKE FIRING PASSES TO DRAW ENEMY FIRE.</li> <li>ONCE ENEMY IS LOCATED TARGET IS SURROUNDED AND SEALED BY SUCCESSIVE TROOP INSERTIONS.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>MISSIONS NOT POPULAR WITH LOH PILOTS BECAUSE IN ORDER TO BE EFFECTIVE, THE CRAFT HAD TO BE FLOWN LOW AND SLOW, WHICH MADE SMALL ARMS FIRE MORE EFFECTIVE.</li> </ul>
SMOKE SUPPORT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>DELIBERATELY PLACED SMOKE WAS USED TO OBSCURE LANDING ZONE AREA WHERE ASSAULT FORCES WERE TO BE HELILANDED.</li> <li>USED DURING ACTUAL ASSAULTS AND ALSO DURING FALSE INSERTIONS TO MAKE THEM LOOK MORE REALISTIC.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>LANDING ZONE OR TREELINE ON PERIPHERY USUALLY CAUGHT FIRE AND CREATED FURTHER PROBLEMS FOR THE ASSAULTING FORCE.</li> </ul>
AERIAL ROCKET ARTILLERY (ARA)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>FFAR AREA WEAPON SYSTEM--RESPONSIVE, FLEXIBLE MEANS OF FIRE SUPPORT.</li> <li>PROVIDED VOLUME AREA FIRE IN SUPPORT OF TROOPS ASSAULTING AN LZ.</li> <li>ARA ON GROUND ALERT COULD RESPOND TO CALLS FOR FIRE ON 2-MINUTE NOTICE.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>ASSIGNED TACTICAL CONVENTIONAL FIELD ARTILLERY MISSIONS BUT WAS NEVER INTENDED TO REPLACE TUBE ARTILLERY.</li> </ul>
CN-54 HELICOPTER POD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>SLING LOAD RESEMBLING A HOUSE TRAILER USED TO TRANSPORT PASSENGERS, CARGO OR OUTFITTED AS A COMMAND POST (CP).</li> <li>CP PODS HAD ALL NECESSARY COMMUNICATIONS TO CONTROL THE DIVISION AND WERE RELOCATABLE ON SHORT NOTICE.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>ONCE ON THE GROUND, THE POD WAS UNGAINLY, HARD TO REMOVE AND VULNERABLE.</li> </ul>
CN-47 BOMBER	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>USED FOR DROPPING DRUMS OF RIOT CONTROL AGENTS, SUCH AS TEAR GAS AS WELL AS NAPALM ON ENEMY FORTIFICATIONS.</li> <li>DID NOT REQUIRE SOPHISTICATED HARDWARE.</li> <li>EFFECTIVE WHENEVER EMPLOYED.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>PRACTICAL ONLY IN ISOLATED SITUATIONS.</li> </ul>
AIRBORNE COMMAND POSTS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>USE OF HELICOPTERS AS CP's BY COMMANDERS FOR EASIER OBSERVATION OF WIDESPREAD COMBAT FORCES AND LIMITED TERRAIN.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>IT WAS NOT UNUSUAL TO FIND THE BNCO, BDE CO, AND A DIV ADC OR CG MOVERING OVER A COMPANY BATTLE WEDDLING IN THE TACTICAL SITUATION. THE TERM "SQUAD LEADER IN THE AIR" WAS USED DERISIVELY INSTEAD OF IN A FLATTERING SENSE.</li> </ul>
SECURE VOICE PROGRAM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>RADIO TRANSMISSION AND RETRANSMISSION SPEECH SECURITY DEVICE USED TO SCRAMBLE VOICES DURING TRANSMISSION PHASE OF RADIO OPERATION.</li> <li>DENIED ENEMY INFORMATION ABOUT TACTICAL OPERATIONS AT ALL LEVELS OF COMMAND.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>EFFECTIVE AT COMMAND LEVELS WHERE AVAILABLE BUT NOT AT THE LOWER TACTICAL LEVELS.</li> </ul>

SOURCES: LTG Tolson, Airmobility and Interviews with COL Thomas A. Ware, LTC Michael Costino and LTC John L. Wood, all USA (Ret.)  
4541/7804

Figure 16-2. Airmobile Combat Operational Innovations

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Aircraft maintenance units were responsible for the recovery of aircraft from locations where they were shot down, forced to land or crashed as a result of enemy action or aircraft malfunction. Conserving the Army aircraft force in Vietnam was essential. Typically, a recovery operation consisted of a rigging ship, carrying personnel who would rig the downed aircraft for helilift, and a recovery ship. This procedure permitted the rapid and careful extraction of hundreds of aircraft of all types. 16/ The sites from which recover were made ranged from quiet airfields, to LZs, to enemy-controlled jungle.

In 1965, the USNS Corpus Christi Bay became a floating US Army aircraft maintenance facility. Corpus Christi Bay was a depot-level repair facility which helped sustain the entire Army aviation fleet in Vietnam. The floating aircraft maintenance facility did not involve the enormous expense in manpower and money that was required to operate a "land based" depot. 17/

The high mobility of ground forces meant increased demand for fuels for the helicopters, the ground vehicles, and associated equipment. The metal 55-gallon drum remained in use throughout the war but it would rust, break, or split. A rubber, 500-gallon container, shaped like a fat wheel was developed. With hookeye devices at axle points, that could be carried as a helicopter slingload to any point and then act as a fuel storage point. For bulk storage, a 10,000-gallon neoprene bladder was developed. With a fuel dispense pump attached, these bladders saw service as forward refueling points throughout Vietnam.

Several types of aerial slings were developed during the war to carry cargo suspended from a helicopter. Cargo nets of all description were also used. Helicopter external loads became the essence of engineering as loads were tailored for special operations. (See Figure 16-3 for an example of an aerial cargo sling).

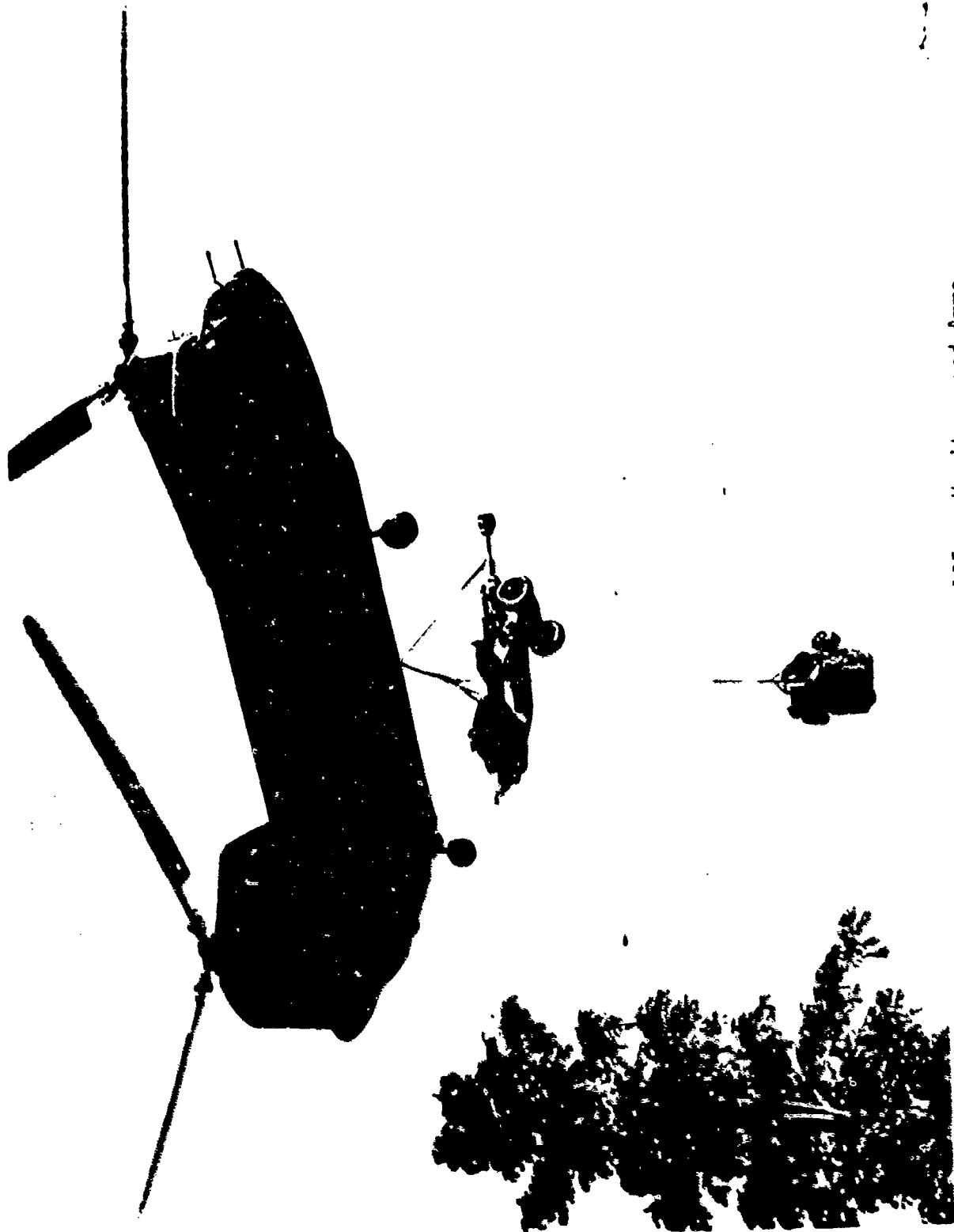


Figure 16-3. CH-47 Carries 105 mm Howitzer and Ammo

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### D. INFANTRY AND ARMOR

US commanders in Vietnam were required to ensure that any tactical operations conducted caused the least amount of impact on the civilian population. Four types of operations merit attention:

- Search and Destroy,
- Clearing Operations,
- Security Operations, and
- Clear and Hold.

Several tactical and technical innovations were developed to support infantry operations in Vietnam (See Figure 16-4).

### E. ENGINEERING SUPPORT

Nondivisional engineer battalions were spread throughout Vietnam to give proper area coverage and to respond to construction needs. The principal activities were projects to build permanent base camps, roads, bridges, airfields, and heliports. The traditional practice of placing most nondivisional engineer units in support of tactical organizations was generally not done due to the nature of the war in Vietnam. It was a mobile war with tactical units, infantry, armor, airmobile, airborne, and cavalry, moving constantly into different areas with different engineer requirements. The centralized control of these engineer battalions by an Engineer Brigade provided the necessary engineer support on an area-wide basis. See Figure 16-5 for several engineering innovations.

### F. RIVERINE ACTIVITY

The Mobile Riverine Force (MRF) implemented the Mobile Afloat Force strategic concept approved by COMUSMACV in 1966. The MRF, and riverine activity in general, was considered necessary because of the great numbers of canals, rivers, and other waterways, especially in the delta and the Rung Sat area east of Saigon, providing enemy lines of communication. Many



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### STARLIGHT SCOPE

- NIGHT VISION DEVICE MAGNIFIED AMBIENT STARLIGHT AND MOONLIGHT UP TO 50,000 TIMES - ENABLED THE FIELD OF VIEW TO BE VISIBLE AS THOUGH IT WAS DAYTIME RATHER THAN NIGHT.
- ON CLOUDY NIGHTS ARTIFICIAL LIGHT COULD BE USED AND AMPLIFIED.

### DEFOLIATION

- HERBICIDES WERE USED TO DESTROY ENEMY CROPS AND TO DENY THE ENEMY THE CONCEALMENT AFFORDED BY THE TROPICAL VEGETATION.
- AGENT ORANGE KILLED PLANTS, TREES, AND UNDERGROWTH BY DISTURBING PATTERNS OF PHOTOSYNTHESIS.
- AGENT BLUE CAUSED LEAVES OF PLANTS, TREES, AND UNDERGROWTH TO TURN BROWN AND THEN DROP OFF.
- TACTICAL USES OF DEFOLIANTS:
  - IMPROVED BASE CAMPS;
  - IMPROVED LZ FIELDS OF FIRE;
  - KEPT CLEAR THOSE AREAS ALREADY CLEARED BY SOME PLOW OPERATIONS;
  - DENIED CONCEALMENT TO ENEMY AMBUSH PATROLS ALONG WATERWAYS AND ROADWAY.
- USE OF AGENT ORANGE WAS DISCONTINUED IN 1970 FOLLOWING CRITICISMS IN THE US THAT IT WAS CAUSING IRREVERSIBLE ECOLOGICAL CHANGES AND MIGHT BE CONTRIBUTING TO STILLBIRTH AND BIRTH DEFECT PHENOMENA.
- AGENT BLUE HAD MIXED RESULTS - WORKED WELL ON MANGROVES BUT OTHER TYPES OF GROWTH DID NOT SHED THEIR LEAVES.

### MULTICHANNEL VHF

- EXTENDED CORPS AREA COMMUNICATION SYSTEM DOWN TO COMPANY LEVEL.
- COMPLEMENTED DIVISION AND UNIT LEVEL SYSTEMS.

### INFANTRY SCOUT/WAR DOGS

- LOCATED TUNNEL ENTRANCES, TRIP MINES AND OTHER BOOBYTRAP PARAPHERNELIA.
- DETECTED GUN OIL AND EXPLOSIVES.
- FOUND DRUGS AND RELATED PARAPHERNELIA.

4541/78W

Figure 16-4. Tactical and Technical Innovations for Infantry Operations

## THE BDM CORPORATION

### DECEPTION, "BAIT AND TRAP", PILE-ON

- TECHNIQUES FOR TACTICAL DECEPTION INCLUDED:
  - FALSE AIRMOBILE INSERTIONS,
  - FALSE OPERATIONAL INFORMATION "LEAKED" BY COMMAND STAFF, MEMBERS
  - ZIG ZAG PATTERNS OF MOVEMENT BY MECHANIZED UNITS,
- "BAIT AND TRAP" TECHNIQUE INVOLVED THE USE OF "LEAKED" INFORMATION AS BAIT AND SETTING UP A TRAP OF PREPOSITIONED FORCES TO STRIKE ENEMY.
- WHEN THE ENEMY WAS SIGHTED, A PILE-ON TECHNIQUE WAS USED TO ENSURE DESTRUCTION OF THE ENEMY INVOLVING THE HELILANDING OF AIRMOBILE INFANTRY UNITS.

### SLAM

- OFFENSIVE MANEUVER - SEEKING, LOCATING, ANNIHILATING AND MONITORING THE ENEMY - CONCENTRATED MASSIVE FIRE POWER IN SUPPORT OF GROUND OPERATIONS.
- B-52's RESPONDED TO INTELLIGENCE GATHERED AND BEGAN THE SLAM ANNIHILATION, FOLLOWED BY TACTICAL AIR STRIKES, NAVAL GUNFIRE AND FIELD ARTILLERY.
- RECONNAISSANCE OF THE TARGET AREA WAS CONTINUOUS TO ASSESS DAMAGE AND TO LOCATE ADDITIONAL TARGETS.

### M16 RIFLE

- PROVIDED MORE DESTRUCTIVE POWER PER ROUND THAN ANY PREVIOUS RIFLE.
- HIGH MUZZLE VELOCITY GAVE M16 ITS 5.56mm PROJECTILE THE DESTRUCTIVE POWER OF A MUCH LARGER WEAPON WHILE PERMITTING A LOW PER-ROUND WEIGHT, HALF THAT OF A 7.62mm RIFLE ROUND.
- PROVED EFFECTIVE IN VIETNAM BECAUSE THE INFANTRYMAN'S WAR WAS FOUGHT AT SHORT RANGE WITH FLEETING TARGETS OFTEN IN DENSE JUNGLE
- CONVERSELY THE M16 REQUIRES EXCESSIVE CARE AND CLEANING TO ASSURE THAT IT WILL FIRE.

### M79 GRENADE LAUNCHER

- SHOULDER-FIRED WEAPON WHICH ACCEPTS AND FIRES A 40mm FIRED-ROUND, HIGH EXPLOSIVE GRENADE
- USEFUL IN VIETNAM AS AN AREA WEAPON TO ATTACK ENEMY WHEN SPECIFIC LOCATION WAS UNKNOWN.
- FOR POINT TARGETS SUCH AS ENEMY WEAPONS POSITIONS, M79 DELIVERED ACCURATE, DESTRUCTIVE FIRE.

### M14 SNIPER RIFLE

- NATIONAL RIFLE MATCH GRADE WEAPONS USED FOR SNIPER OPERATIONS WITH 3-9 POWER TELESCOPE AND BUILT-IN RANGE FINDER ADDED
- SUCCESSFUL IN COUNTERING ENEMY SNIPERS

### MECHANIZED INFANTRY NIGHT OPERATIONS

- NIGHT SEARCHES FOR THE ENEMY SUCCESSFULLY ACCOMPLISHED BY PLACING PATROLS ON POSSIBLE VILLAGE ESCAPE ROUTES
- ENEMY HAD NO WARNING OR ESCAPE TIME

4641/TDM

Figure 16-4. Tactical and Technical Innovations for Infantry Operations (Continued)

# THE BDM CORPORATION

## INFANTRY OPERATIONS

### ARMORED PERSONNEL CARRIER (APC), M113

- WORKHORSE OF THE MECHANIZED INFANTRY AND CAVALRY
- NUMEROUS CASUALTIES RESULTED FROM APC'S RUNNING OVER MINES.
- INNOVATIONS TO ALLEVIATE APC SUSCEPTIBILITY TO MINE BLASTS INCLUDED:
  - TROOPS RODE ON TOP OF THE APC SO AS TO BE ABLE TO SEE, SHOOT AND DISMOUNT QUICKLY;
  - EXTENSIONS FOR THE LATERALS AND ACCELERATOR OF THE APC WERE DEVELOPED TO ALLOW THE DRIVER TO OPERATE THE VEHICLE FROM TOPSIDE 18/;
  - ADDITIONAL ARMORPLATE WAS WELDED TO THE BOTTOM OF APCs.

### FOLDING APCs

- APCs WERE VERY EFFECTIVE KILLING MACHINES BUT THEY WERE LARGE AND BOXY AND MADE GOOD TARGETS FOR ENEMY RPGs.
- 4-SIDED HINGED PLYWOOD "DUMMY" APCs WITH TAPE RECORDERS PLAYING TAPES OF VOICES WERE USED TO DECEIVE THE ENEMY.

### ARMORED CAVALRY ASSAULT VEHICLE (ACAV)

- USED AS A LIGHT ASSAULT VEHICLE - DESTROYED THE ENEMY IN CLOSE CONTACT.
- ACAV WAS A MODIFIED M113 ARMORED PERSONNEL CARRIER USED AS SUBSTITUTE FOR TANKS IN CAVALRY PLATOONS.
- INNOVATIONS INCLUDED: SHIELD PROVIDED FOR 50 CALIBER MACHINEGUN. TWO M60 7.62mm MACHINEGUNS MOUNTED ON TOP. ALTERNATE M60 MOUNTED AT THE REAR AND INSTALLATION OF WATCH ARMOR. 19/

### ANTI-RPG SCREEN

- ACAVs OR APCs IN STATIC POSITIONS WERE EASY TARGETS FOR ENEMY ROCKET-PROPELLED GRENADES (RPGs).
- US TROOPS SET UP "LYCLONE" FENCING IN FRONT OF A VEHICLE'S POSITION--INSTEAD OF DESTROYING THE VEHICLES, RPG WARHEADS WOULD STRIKE THE FENCE AND DETONATE.

### ARMOR THUNDER RUN

- ENEMY MINING ACTIVITY OCCURRED MOST FREQUENTLY AT NIGHT.
- DURING THE NIGHT ARMORED VEHICLES MADE INTERMITTENT HIGH SPEED RUNS FIRING ALL WEAPONS AT LIKELY ENEMY LOCATIONS.
- THUNDER FIRING WAS SUCCESSFUL IN DENYING ACCESS AND BECAME A STANDARD TACTIC.
- IF THE OPERATION WAS REPEATED NIGHT AFTER NIGHT IT WAS VERY SUSCEPTIBLE TO AMBUSH. 20/

### MECHANICAL AMBUSH--CLAYMORE MINES

- GROUND-BASED DIRECTIONAL WEAPON--WHEN FIRED, SENT SHRAPNEL OUT IN A CONT. TRAJECTORY
- WHEN USED WITH SENSORS INDICATING ENEMY ACTIVITY, ADJACENT CLAYMORES COULD BE REMOTELY FIRED. 21/
- US COUNTERED ENEMY NOTATION OF MINES TO FIRE TOWARD US OR ADV. FORCES BY PAINTING REAR OF THE MINE WHITE TO DISSEMIN. DIRECTION OF MINE BLAST

46A178W

Figure 16-4. Tactical and Technical Innovations for Infantry Operations (Continued)

## THE BDM CORPORATION

### COMBAT ENGINEERING SUPPORT

- CH-47 OR CH-54 HELICOPTERS WERE USED TO TRANSPORT EQUIPMENT TO CONSTRUCT REMOTE FIREBASES, SPECIAL FORCES CAMPS, ETC.
- SOME EQUIPMENT WAS "MINIATURIZED" OR SCALED DOWN FOR USE IN VIETNAM.

### LZ CLEARING

- BLU-288 BOMBS WERE DROPPED FROM USAF C-130 AIRPLANES OR WORLD WAR II BLOCKBUSTER BOMBS WERE DROPPED BY CH-54 HELICOPTERS TO CLEAR LANDING ZONES.
- BULLDOZERS WERE THEN HELILANDED TO ACCOMPLISH ADDITIONAL CLEARING AND ENGINEER TROOPS USED EXPLOSIVES, SAWS, AND OTHER TOOLS TO CLEAR HELICOPTER APPROACH AND DEPARTURE PATHS.

### TUNNEL CLEARING

- EXPLOSIVES, TEAR GAS, FLOODING, BULLDOZING, ROME PLOWING, CRUSHING WITH ARMORED VEHICLES AND SMOKE WERE USED TO CLEAR TUNNELS. 22/
- WITHOUT KNOWLEDGE OF BUILT-IN AIRLOCKS OR SEALS, PROPER RESULTS WERE IMPOSSIBLE.

### ROAD/RUNWAY CONSTRUCTION

- CLAY-LIME STABILIZATION - USE OF LIME AND CLAY OVER MUD TO CREATE A FIRM SUBBASE FOR ASPHALT PAVEMENT FORMED A STABLE ROADWAY.
- PENEPRIME - ASPHALT BASE LIQUID USED AS DUST CONTROL AGENT.
- T-17 SURFACE MEMBRANE - LARGE NYLON SHEETS LAID OVER A WELL-COMPACTED AND CROWNED SUBGRADE PROVIDED A DURABLE, WATERPROOF AND DUSTPROOF SURFACE.

### LAND CLEARING

- EXTREMELY EFFECTIVE OPERATIONS INVOLVED THE USE OF ROME PLOWS, THE KING RANCH CONCEPT, YO-YO DOZING AND TREE CRUSHERS.

### BUNKER KITS

- TO SPEED UP INSTALLATION OF BUNKERS, ALL NECESSARY MATERIAL FOR CONSTRUCTING A BUNKER WAS PACKAGED INTO A KIT BY TACTICAL UNITS AND TRANSPORTED TO THE LZ OR FIREBASE BEING EXPANDED. 23/
- KITS NORMALLY CONTAINED 15 POUND SHAPED CHARGES TO BLAST A HOLE FOR THE BUNKERS, EMPTY SANDBAGS, AND TWO SHEETS OF PIERCED STEEL PLANKING.

### MINE CLEARING

- EXPENDABLE MINE ROLLERS ATTACHED TO MEDIUM TANKS DETONATED MINES BY HIGH PRESSURE WEIGHT EXERTED ON THE GROUND
- DAILY ROAD MINESWEEPS RESULTED IN QUICK DETECTION OF MINES.
- LACK OF CONTROL OVER LOOSE MATERIALS SUCH AS ABANDONED DUD ROUNDS, ORDNANCE, EXPLOSIVES, RATION TINS, AND AMMUNITION PACKAGING RESULTED IN ENEMY USE FOR OFF-ROAD MINES AND BOOBYTRAPS.

### DeLONG PIER

- PIERS WERE MADE OF PREFABRICATED BARGES.
- ARMY ENGINEERS PERFORMED THE DREDGING, FILLING AND CONSTRUCTION OF CAUSEWAYS NECESSARY FOR DeLONG PIER OPERATION.
- WAS THE SINGLEMOST IMPORTANT ITEM TO THE RAPID DEVELOPMENT AND GROWTH OF PORTS.

4841/78W

Figure 16-5. Operational Innovations for Engineering Support

## THE BDM CORPORATION

of these waterways served legitimate commerce, and denying their use to the enemy aided the population and gave notice of the government's concern. Just as in 1945-1954, the enemy enjoyed excellent intelligence and used ambushes, remotely controlled floating mines, and obstacles with good effect. The enemy also enjoyed considerable support from local populations. Operational innovations are depicted in Figure 16-6. An important critic of the US riverine activity in Vietnam's delta was LTG Victor H. Krulak, USMC, who was CGFMFPAC from 1965 to 1968. General Krulak commented that he made a bad decision when he agreed with Marine Corps Commandant Wallace M. Greene, Jr., not to get into the Mekong Delta battles. He stated that the US copied the French tactics of 1946-1954 and recreated their mistakes, that we spent millions of dollars on the kind of operations that was "...outmoded when Igor Sikorski began to think." 24/

### G. FIELD ARTILLERY

The nature of hostilities in RVN made it necessary for artillery firing batteries to provide all-around protection, often from isolated firebases. Perhaps the main criterion in selecting a battery position was that it be within the effective range of one or more other batteries.

One of the important developments introduced in RVN was the controlled fragmentation munition (COFRAM), which Army Ordnance had been working on in a highly classified program to develop improved fragmentation. This program included hand grenades; 40mm rifle grenades; 105mm, 155mm, and 8" howitzer artillery munitions, and a conventional rocket projectile for the HONEST JOHN free flight rocket system. The artillery shells each contained sub-munitions which were dispersed above the target and consequently covered a much larger lethal area than a conventional HE round. Also, an antipersonnel mine was developed as part of this program. Until the Tet offensive in 1968, the munition remained classified, and the war reserve stockpile was not released for use. During the Tet offensive, General Westmoreland requested that the Department of the Army declassify and release for use in Vietnam the COFRAM stocks then held in war reserve on

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### RIVERINE OPERATIONS

#### ARTILLERY BARGE

- 105mm TOWED HOWITZER PLACED ON A SMALL AMMI BARGE.
- WHEN ANCHORED TO A BANK ON A WATERWAY, AIMING STAKES WERE PLACED ASHORE FOR FIRING OF WEAPON IN COMBAT.

#### MORTAR SUPPORT

- TWO 81mm MORTARS INSTALLED FORWARD IN THE LCMs.
- PROVIDED HIGH MOBILITY AND FAST RESPONSE.

#### SHIPBOARD HELIPADS

- HELICOPTER BARGES CONSTRUCTED TO ACCOMMODATE THREE UH-1 HELICOPTERS AND 9,000 POUNDS OF TURBINE FUEL.
- FACILITATED COMMAND AND CONTROL, MEDEVAC, AND RESUPPLY.

#### AIR CUSHION VEHICLE (ACV)

- USED ON DELTA SWAMPLAND WITH A LARGE CENTRIFUGAL LIFT FAN BENEATH THE CRAFT WHICH SUPPLIED A LARGE VOLUME OF LOW PRESSURE AIR UPON WHICH THE VEHICLE "RESTED".
- CAPABLE OF TRANSPORTING AN INFANTRY SQUAD AT SPEEDS UP TO 70 MILES PER HOUR.
- ARMED WITH 7.62mm FLEXIBLE MACHINE GUNS AND 40mm GRENADE LAUNCHERS.
- SUCCESSFUL IN SECURITY MISSIONS AND CARGO AND TROOP TRANSPORT OPERATIONS, BUT NOT WIDELY USED BECAUSE OF HIGH FUEL CONSUMPTION RATE. 25/

Figure 16-6. Mobile Riverine Force Operational Innovations

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Okinawa. The Department of the Army approved the request and artillery munitions were shipped by both air and sea to RVN on an expedited basis. 26/

Later, the USAF, which had also developed air-droppable submunitions utilizing the COFRAM principle, employed the weapon with varying degrees of success in RVN. Other field artillery developments are reflected in Figure 16-7.

### H. SENSORS

Sensors and fire support were closely integrated by ground forces in Vietnam in situations such as base camp or LZ defense, or establishing unmanned ambush sites. Beginning in 1967, the Defense Communication Planning Group (DCPG) developed and tested a family of sensors as well as new munitions for the war. The sensors detected enemy activity through built-in radio transmitters which sent the information to a monitoring system. Sensors were essentially early warning or alerting devices, allowing real-time response to enemy movement or action. They had to be accurately emplaced. In enemy territory this was often accomplished by aircraft with less than optimum accuracy. 29/ There were several types of sensors developed:

- Seismic,
- Acoustic,
- Magnetic,
- Radar, and
- Infrared.

Use of sensors on a grand scale was accomplished during Operation Igloo White, 1967-1972. This was the seeding of the Ho Chi Minh trail in Laos. The operation began in late 1967, building to a maximum by 1972, in effect automating interdiction of the trail. The thousands of sensors of all types emplaced along the trail by air were monitored by an Infiltration Surveillance Center at Nakhon Phanom, Thailand, equipped with a computer to process and store sensor information. The center received data from the

FIELD ARTILLERY

ARTILLERY AMBUSH

- USE OF DIFFERENT COLORED TRIP FLARES AND UNATTENDED GROUND SENSORS LOCATED ALONG ENEMY AVENUES OF ADVANCE TO FIREBASES.
- PRE-REGISTERED ARTILLERY FIRED ON ENEMY WHEN FLARES WERE TRIPPED WITH COLOR SEQUENCE SHOWING ENEMY DIRECTION OF MOVEMENT. 27/

KILLER JUNIOR AND SENIOR

- DIRECT FIRE PROGRAMS USED TO DESTROY ENEMY HUMAN WAVE TYPE ATTACKS AGAINST FIREBASES.
- KILLER JUNIOR - 105mm AND 155mm FIRE
- KILLER SENIOR - 203mm FIRE

MAD MINUTE

- INFANTRY ON THE FIREBASE PERIMETER FIRED WEAPONS FOR ONE MINUTE TO DISRUPT ANY ACTIVITY THAT AN UNKNOWN ENEMY BEYOND THE FIREBASE PERIMETER MIGHT BE PLANNING.
- MAD MINUTE FIRINGS SURPRISED AND SOMETIMES CLEARED AWAY THE ENEMY, BUT THE OPERATION ALSO MADE IT POSSIBLE FOR THE ENEMY TO DISCERN ANY GAPS IN THE FIREBASES'S DEFENSE BASED ON THE POSITION OF THE WEAPONS FIRING AND THEIR TRAJECTORY.

FLAMING STEEL MONSOON

- CONSERVED MANPOWER BY THE USE OF ARTILLERY AND OTHER AREA WEAPON FIREPOWER TO NEUTRALIZE ENEMY BASE AREAS ON THE PERIPHERY OF FIREBASES OR BASECAMPS.

360° HOWITZER

- CONSTRUCTED PALLET OR PEDESTAL TO PERMIT REPOSITIONING OR SPEED SHIFT OF THE 155mm TOWED HOWITZER.
- HOWITZER ROTATED 360° BY LIFTING THE TRAILS.
- ENABLED FREEDOM AND SPEED OF MOVEMENT THROUGH 360° NOT PREVIOUSLY EXPERIENCED IN VIETNAM, WHERE THE MUD AND SOFT GROUND GAVE WAY TO ANY RECOILING FORCE. 28/

Figure 16-7. Field Artillery Operations



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sensors by means of electronic relay from sensor surveillance aircraft in orbit near the trail. Rapid response to enemy activity sensed along the trail was accomplished by attack aircraft on airborne alert over Laos and Thailand. DCPG also developed new munitions which were very useful during Igloo White, such as the BLU-24, BLU-66, and the fuel-air explosive bomb. In combination these were referred to as 21st century technology. 30/

### I. COMMUNIST TACTICAL AND TECHNICAL INNOVATIONS

The tactics and methods of the North Vietnamese and Viet Cong were quite different from those of enemy forces in World War II and Korea. The terrain of Vietnam favored the easily hidden, lightly loaded foot soldier. Enemy tactical operations, with their political overtones, were generally well planned and organized:

- Terrorism and ambush were the favored methods of attack instead of heavy contact;
- The enemy retained the initiative through offensive action;
- Allied weak spots were selected for attack instead of allied strong points; and
- They massed, attacked and withdrew before allied forces could react.

#### 1. Mines and Booby Traps

Mines and booby traps were used very successfully by the VC. By cleverly planting and disguising these devices in indiscriminate places, the VC often effectively hindered or prevented the use of supply roads and off-the-road operations. Enemy mines and booby traps caused approximately 70 per cent of vehicle losses and 11 percent of combat deaths in the US Army. 31/ The simple and cheap booby-trap proved to be a most cost-effective weapon. Figure 16-8 describes some of these devices.

#### 2. North Vietnamese Air Defense Systems

Surface-to-air (SAM) missile launching sites first appeared in North Vietnam in July 1965. By 1972, there were approximately 300 launching sites throughout North Vietnam. Soviet SA-2 Guideline surface-to-air

## THE BDM CORPORATION

### VIET CONG DEVICES

#### TIN CAN GRENADES:

- GRENADES PLACED IN CANS WITH PINS REMOVED, A PULL ON A TRIP-WIRE WOULD EXTRACT AND EXPLODE THE GRENADE

#### PUNJI STAKES:

- SHARPENED SPIKES MADE OF STEEL OR BAMBOO EMBEDDED IN THE FLOOR OF A SHALLOW PIT COVERED BY TWIGS AND FOLIAGE

#### SPIKED BALL:

- HEAVY MUD BALL WITH SPIKED PUNJI STAKES ATTACHED TO A TREE AND WHEN RELEASED BY A TRIP-WIRE WOULD SWING HARD ACROSS PATH

#### STREAM GRENADES:

- GRENADES PLACED IN STREAMS, MINOR RIVERS AND SWAMPS

#### BOW AND ARROW:

- BOW EMBEDDED IN SIDES OF CONCEALED PIT, ARROW HELD UNDER TENSION IN THE BOW AND RELEASED BY ACTUATING A TRIP-WIRE RUNNING ACROSS THE TRACK

Figure 16-8. Viet Cong Mines and Booby Traps

## THE BDM CORPORATION

missiles were effectively used against US aircraft. Targets were acquired by a broad-beam radar scanner and tracked by a narrow-beam radar scanner. Data was fed into a computer which calculated the optimum trajectory for the missile and commands were transmitted by cable to the launcher giving direction, angle and time of launch. Instructions to the airborne missile were by radio link. This command guidance system required that targets be held by the tracking radar throughout the missile's flight.

The AGM-45A Shrike Antiradar missile was developed by the US to counter North Vietnamese-launched SAMs. US pilots could detect transmissions from the SAM's target-acquisition radar and when within range, they could launch Shrike missiles capable of flying down the radar beam guided by an on-board detector. The North Vietnamese countered the early successes of the Shrike by ceasing to use the SA-2's target acquisition radar and gathering information on US aircraft positions on remote EW/GCI radars. The tracking radar at the missile site was kept on "dummy load" and switched to "operate" only when US aircraft were in range. The SAM missile was launched almost immediately, guided briefly, and then the radar was switched back to "dummy load". 32/

The North Vietnamese were also successful in shooting down US aircraft with only small arms and machine gun fire. Soviet-supplied 37mm twin AA guns fired 1.58lb shells to an effective antiaircraft range of 4,920 feet. The Soviet SA-7 "Grail" man-portable antiaircraft missile, introduced in North Vietnam April 1972, was especially effective against low-flying, slower aircraft.

### J. SUMMARY ANALYSIS

Many lessons learned were passed through the chain of command to USARV where they were staffed and then sent to CONUS. 33/ Some of the lessons learned were published in USARV media but, for the most part, a good idea or innovation devised in a US unit in the Delta seldom reached the ears of the trooper in I Corps to the north.

## THE BDM CORPORATION

There are mixed feelings about technology and the Vietnam war. There are those who say that, on balance, technology hurt the US effort in Vietnam more than it helped. 34/ Some contend that the Army fielded inferior weapons in Vietnam and went overboard on gadgetry. 35/ A science adviser holds that technology was very effective, producing new advances in sensors, night vision devices, and the use of national assets, for example satellites, in collecting tactical intelligence. 36/ Another advisor considers that it was a war where we used 21st century airplanes, but 19th century bombs and 17th century procedures. 37/ Some see the use of technology by the US in Vietnam as evidence of a national style, where being the leading technological country brought forth the natural American reaction to look for a technological answer to the problem of Vietnam. 38/

The prevailing attitude of US national leaders at the time was that any technology considered of value to US military success was of value and was to be pursued. Defense Secretary McNamara went so far as to make himself the sensor program manager. Such action ensured that appropriate funding, focus, and attention were brought to this particular effort. 39/ At the top levels of the military, one finds that the US Air Force was the most technology oriented, establishing a research and development element at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, Ohio, to provide technological support to the Vietnam effort. 40/

As to the procedures and organizations for research and development (R&D), there were shortcomings. For quick reaction R&D support, the Defense establishment was organized poorly and its procedures were too cumbersome. 41/ The Services and Department of Defense set aside funds for this R&D. But those who were looking at and developing the technology had no control of the funds. Once a particular project was decided upon and put into the format of the budgeteer, requests had to be made for funds for the project before work could commence. To solve this impediment to quick reaction, one agency or element should have been responsible for both the funding and the technological idea. The Army did just this, but only for

## THE BDM CORPORATION

certain projects. The Navy was the only Service which consistently permitted those who were in control of the technical aspects of R&D to also have control of the funding. Otherwise, one found that if a project was either initially underfunded or while underway needed additional funding, a reprogramming action had to be initiated.

As to how technology got down to the soldier, the Army illustrates the typical dual approach. First, there were the reports from the field which stated the significant problems faced. It was left to higher headquarters, to the R&D community, to address these matters. If an item of hardware was the answer, real or predicted, it was funded, developed, acquired, and eventually shipped to the troops. The second avenue was the development of ideas by the R&D community itself, wherein it came up with the idea and then approached the soldier or commander in the field. Often, in the view of one MACSA, the field would say, "We'll win with what we've got. We don't need anything else."<sup>42/</sup> In the Army, if R&D had an idea for a better sensor for example, MACSA would handle the field evaluation by having an operator or user join the R&D evaluators to find if it made sense or not to produce the better sensor and get it to the field.

Once any new technology hardware arrived in Vietnam for test and evaluation, ACTIV, rather than command echelons such as divisions, coordinated, set up, and ran the tests. Albeit that the tests might be run within a division or other unit, ACTIV personnel were on the scene to see that established evaluation procedures were followed, and to provide on-the-spot technical advice as needed. ACTIV was assigned to Headquarters, USARV, and maintained liaison with the MACSA.

The time, effort, priorities, and funds given to the production of technical innovations during the Vietnam war were significant, positive factors in the prosecution of the war. Without technical innovations, the war would have been even more costly in American lives. Technology did not hurt the US effort as has been suggested. The great number of varied resources available to commanders may have given the impression that such "excess" overwhelmed us and prescribed the tactics that were used.<sup>43/</sup>

## THE BDM CORPORATION

### K. INSIGHTS

Most operational innovations were the result of the application of human ingenuity in the field, proposed and recommended or constructed by soldiers in the ranks rather than by filtering down from a research agency or senior command level.

Militating against the countrywide implementation of a practical innovation was the lack of sufficient cross-fertilization of good ideas or lessons learned. Army lessons learned were passed through the chain of command to USARV where they were staffed and then sent to CONUS. Some of the lessons learned were published in USARV media, but, for the most part, a good idea or innovation devised in a US unit in the Delta seldom reached the ears of the soldier in I Corps to the north.

The 12-month tour also mitigated the spread of lessons learned because newly arrived personnel were usually not aware of what had proved disastrous or feasible in the past. Institutional memory was also degraded by the six-month command tour.

Several useful technological developments resulted from the extensive R&D effort pursued during the Vietnam War, including:

- In aerial combat: Improvements in the air-to-air missiles and development of effective air-to-air tactics which materially altered the kill ratio in aerial combat from about 2-to-1 to approximately 12-to-1 in favor of the US.
- In air-to-ground combat: The development of "smart bombs" coupled with effective ECCM equipment, tactics, and techniques made possible the devastating Linebacker I and II attacks against North Vietnam. Fixed-wing gunships and use of long-range navigation (LORAN D) were also important developments.
- In ground combat: The evolution of the various helicopters used in airmobile operations and improvements in their operational capabilities, ordnance, tactics and techniques was perhaps the most conspicuous development in this category. Night vision devices made an important and welcome contribution.

## THE LDM CORPORATION

Sensors were improved significantly and, after being grossly misused in the McNamara Line (Project MASON or Operation DYE MARKER) proved to be extremely useful in the defense of Khe Sanh (1968). That experience illustrates that to be effective even the most sophisticated and useful devices have to be used properly.

The Defense establishment was poorly organized and its procedures were too cumbersome for quick-reaction R&D support. Those developing technology rarely had control of the funds required for the development. The Navy was the only Service which consistently permitted those who were in control of the technical aspects of R&D to have control of the funding.

The airmobile concept was proven valid in the specific environment in which it was employed in Vietnam, where the US had air supremacy and enemy air defenses within RVN were not sophisticated through 1972. The helicopter's survivability can only be assessed in the context of the enemy's location, weapons, and air defense capabilities and the scenario in which the helicopter will be employed plus the suppressive fire power available. The Soviets studied the airmobile operations in Vietnam and have since improved and enlarged their capability. Someone learned a lesson.

The time, effort, priorities, and funds given to the production of technical innovations during the Vietnam War were a significant, positive factor in the prosecution of the war. Without technical innovations, the war would have been even more costly in lives.

### L. LESSONS

It requires an organized effort to relate field commanders' requirements to scientific capability, and, to be effective, the scientific R&D effort should include joint representation. In time of hostilities, special funding is required to overcome the lack of lead time required in the budget cycle. The military Services, except for the Air Force, tend to be too slow in fielding new materiel and in going into procurement. Quick reaction to requirements requires that Service R&D organizations be allocated funds and technical responsibility for examining and resolving specific requirements.

## THE BDM CORPORATION

Despite technology, ingenuity, trial and error, and operational variants, the US has no remedy to date for mine and boobytrap warfare. Mine detection is still accomplished through the painfully slow probe process or sweeps with electromechanical detectors.



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## APPENDIX

### Selected MACV Significant Problem Areas

1. Countering indirect fire attacks from mortars, recoilless rockets, artillery and rockets by adequate detection and ability to neutralize.

- Equipment available included counter mortar (MPQ-4A) and counter battery (TPQ-10A) radars and the GR-8 acoustic system, all obsolescent with limited coverage, in limited numbers and with negligible spare parts.

- Various acoustic devices were tested but only one, the Los Alamos Scientific Laboratory System, proved of any use. (It was simple, inexpensive, very portable, and gave good coverage to approximately 10 km. It, as with many other RVN-related developments, became the victim of no official "requirement" and was dropped.) The Integrated Observation System (IOS), including a platform on which could be mounted any combination of a laser range finder, a selectable 10/20X binocular and the large night observation device (NOD) was developed for OP use. It proved very useful for line-of-sight observation. Approximately 12 were produced and used by US forces only.

...Problem not solved.

2. Detecting and neutralizing mines and booby traps, including those emplaced in water.

- Equipment available included the hand-held mine detector which had limited range, was slow and undependable; probing with bayonets; sandbags in vehicles to absorb the blast and shock; chain drags in rivers and other equally undependable means. The cost of mine and booby trap casualties in suffering and dollars to US forces was staggering; to innocent Vietnamese civilians even worse.

- A number of devices were developed and tested, most with at best limited effectiveness. Two significant developments resulted from this requirement: FAE and mine dogs. The phenomenon of sizeable overpressures being generated by the explosion of fuel-air mixtures had long been known and had been considered by the development community. When the requirement for mine neutralization in remote helicopter landing zones came from III MAF, FAE efforts were increased. The first hand emplaced units were employed in 1967, with the first air delivered units employed in 1970. FAE, as developed, is excellent for destroying

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pressure-sensitive devices\* but has limitations because of the collateral damage potential.

- The dogs trained for detecting explosive devices were probably the most cost effective development of the entire conflict. These dogs proved effective in detecting mines, booby traps, tripwires and munition caches. Their effectiveness, as with almost anything, depended upon how they were employed -- including "R&R", "maintenance and upkeep", reinforcement training and an awareness of specialization. (One Marine mine dog was particularly adept at detecting tripwires. She was used almost exclusively in an area southwest of DaNang where the enemy sappers specialized in using tripwire devices). Approximately 50 mine dogs were provided US Forces. Training assistance and manuals were provided the Vietnamese, who trained a number of mine dogs.

### ...Problem Not Adequately Solved.

3. Ability to acquire and neutralize ground targets by strike aircraft during night/all-weather conditions.

- The SLAR/flare aircraft teamed with strike aircraft and the "Fire-fly" (helo with a searchlight) were the most successful means initially employed, but were far from satisfactory.

- A number of solutions were attempted for this requirement, all with varying degrees of success. Efforts ranged from low light level TV (LLTV) and improved munitions (Tropic Moon a/c), Gunship II with a NOD or side looking IR and covert illumination; the TRIM aircraft with radars, IR, LLLTV, ECM and the "people sniffer" vapor detector; the Blackspot (AC-123K) with various munitions and sensors; and the improved Gunship with various sensors and a laser target designator (LTD) which teamed with F-4s employing laser guided ordnance. The incendiary munitions (misch metal filled) were particularly effective against POL targets.

- All in all the efforts did provide a degree of improvement, but did not contribute anything substantial.\*\*

\* The FAE weapon, with its large area coverage at 300 psi overpressure, is an excellent weapon for pressure-sensitive targets. The A-1 aircraft, backbone of the RVNAF, could carry 14 of the FAE weapons, the CBU-55s. This was the prime candidate for replacing the B-52 Arc Light strikes in the Vietnamization program.

\*\* While none of these specially equipped aircraft are in the military inventory today, some of the sensor equipment developed then is now being used very successfully by the US Customs Service on its Citation II surveillance aircraft.

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### ...Problem Not Solved.

#### 4. Regular improvements in night vision/area illumination.

- The metascope with its IR light provided short range night vision aid. Various aircraft flares and artillery/mortar illumination projectiles provided limited area illumination.

- Development of passive image intensification devices had been in progress for some years. Purely by coincidence the first production quantity of the first generation night observation devices (NOD) was scheduled for delivery to the military in 1967. The tremendous improvement in night vision capability made possible with the NODs is one of the most important achievements of technology in the Vietnam war. It is to be noted, however, that the NOD was a standard development, and was not a result of the war.

### ...This improvement in night vision is one of the very few improvements exhibited in any of the MACV Significant Problem Areas.

#### 5. Require improved methods to provide real-time detection and location of enemy personnel and material.

- In early 1966, the first military seismic intrusion device (SID) was introduced by the Marines in ICTZ. This hard-wire device with its four small geophones was quite effective, but very limited in range and most dependent upon operator skill. (These SIDs were already in use by Marines at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba).

- A hand-held personnel detector had been developed which detected human affluents in the air. This "people sniffer" proved to be completely impractical for ground use, but when modified for helicopter use, proved very useful.

- Various personnel/motion detection radars, some with foliage penetration, were fielded and proved of limited use.

- The Defense Communications Planning Group (DCPG), later redesignated the Defense Special Projects Group (DSPG), was responsible for the development of a wide range of sensors that were employed not only within Vietnam but out-of-country as well. Various air-delivered as well as hand-emplaced devices with signals read-out by aircraft in orbit (Duffle Bag sensors) or from ground stations proved to be exceedingly useful. These sensors progressed through three phases of design improvement from their initial introduction until the end of the conflict.

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- The sensor systems that were developed through DCPG/DSPG were probably the most significant contribution of the Research and Development Community to have been employed in Vietnam.

### ...Problem partially solved.

6. Require improvements in countermeasures for electronic warfare and for visual/optical, electro-optical and IR devices to enable aircraft to perform missions and survive.

- The EW countermeasure equipments in use were bulky and not practical for many aircraft or missions. There were no V/O, EO or IR countermeasures.
- Chaff and ECM devices used during Linebacker I and II proved to be fairly effective when used properly.
- Except for small arms fire -- which was more effective than predicted -- the aircraft operations in South Vietnam were conducted in a totally passive environment. The acceptance of almost total dependence on air for movement of personnel, resupply, medevac, etc., will require major technological advances in countermeasures if it is to continue.

### ...Problem not solved.

7. Require improved narrow band secure voice communications.

- Communications were a continual problem. Frequently allocations were controlled by the Vietnamese, often somewhat arbitrarily. The usual secure voice systems were either compromised or at least suspect. More and more dependence was placed on satellite communications without adequate backup.

### ...Problem not solved.

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5. LTG. John J. Tolson, Airmobility 1961-1971, Vietnam Studies (Washington, D.C.: Department of the Army, 1973), p. 15.
6. Ibid., p. 18.
7. LTG John H. Hay, Jr., Tactical and Materiel Innovations, Vietnam Studies (Washington, D.C.: Department of the Army, 1974), p. 16.
8. Tolson, p. 47.

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9. Hay, p. 123; and John Leonard Wood, LTC USA (Ret), who supported LRRP operations 1966-67 of the 173d Abn Bde as member of its 335th Aslt Hel. Co. Interviewed at The BDM Corporation, November 1979.
10. Hay, p. 17.
11. Ibid., p. 22.
12. Table 16-1 is based on Tolson, p. 141. Also Thomas A. Ware, Col USA, (Ret). As Commander 2d Brigade, 101st Airborne Division (Airmobile), 1971-72, he stated that the napalm strikes by CH-47 were employed and neutralized enemy strongpoints. Interviewed at The BDM Corporation, November 1979. LTC Michael Costino and LTC John L. Wood, both former helicopter unit commanders in Vietnam and now retired from the Army, also described Airmobile operations and innovations during a series of interviews at The BDM Corporation during November and December 1979.
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14. Americans Missing in Southeast Asia. Final Report, Select Committee on Missing Persons in Southeast Asia, United States House of Representatives (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1976), p. 153; and David Miller, Major, in The Vietnam War, edited by Ray Bonds (New York: Crown Publishers, Inc., 1979), p. 34.
15. Neel, Medical Support, p. 71.
16. Hay, p. 161.
17. Tolson, p. 91.
18. Ware interview. Based on personal experiences as Commander, 4th Battalion, 23d Infantry (Mechanized), 25th Infantry Division, 1967-1968.
19. Gen. Donn A. Starry, Mounted Combat in Vietnam, Vietnam Studies (Washington, D.C.: Department of the Army, 1978), p. 38.
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29. Kirk interview.
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31. Hay, p. 130 and David Miller, Major, in The Vietnam War, p. 23.
32. Major David Miller, in The Vietnam War, p. 39.
33. Wood interview. As Operations Officer, Aviation Division, Headquarters US Army Vietnam, 1970, he processed and staffed all aviation-related lessons learned.
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41. Ibid.
42. Ibid. General Hermann Balck (Commander of the motorized infantry regiment which forced a crossing of the Meuse in 1940, commander of the panzer battle group which outflanked the British on Mt. Olympus; inspector of Mobil Troops from November 1941 to May 1942; and Divisional and Corps commander on both the Eastern and Western Fronts thereafter) makes a similar observation in an interview conducted by Battelle Corporation on April 13, 1979. General Balck states that: "You know, initially the troops are always against every new piece of equipment. 'Aw, it causes more work. It has to be carried. We did fine without it.' The next thing that happens, the new weapon is packed away with great care - just where it can't be grabbed when needed." Translation of Taped Conversation with General Hermann Balck, April 13, 1979. Battelle Columbus Laboratories, Columbus, Ohio, July 1979, p. 22.
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## CHAPTER 17

### ALLIES

In addition to its quest for domestic understanding and support, the White House was obsessed with the need to widen international support for the Government of South Vietnam. The "More Flags" campaign had gotten off to a slow start in late 1964. It required the application of considerable pressure for Washington to elicit any meaningful commitments. One of the more exasperating aspects of the search for "More Flags" was the lassitude, even disinterest, of the Saigon Government. In part the reason was that the South Vietnamese leaders were preoccupied with political jockeying; in part, too, they were unable to take the initiative on almost any matter, whether it concerned the war or a peace. In addition Saigon appeared to believe that the program was a public relations campaign directed at the American people. As a consequence, it was left to Washington to play the role of supplicant in the quest for Free World support.<sup>1/</sup>

Chester L. Cooper 1972

Remember that the name of the game was to provide 'additional flags' and the specific configuration and combat power of the allied forces were a secondary consideration.<sup>2/</sup>

General Richard G. Stilwell 1979

#### A. INTRODUCTION

Regardless of the American efforts to enlist the support of our allies in "saving" South Vietnam from communism, the Vietnam War became, in world opinion, and even in American opinion, America's war. Even though by 1973, when the last American soldier had departed from Vietnam and the RVNAF fully took on the conduct of the war, American economic and military assistance were responsible largely for the maintenance of South Vietnam's forces.

When the final collapse of the South Vietnamese government occurred in April 1975, America felt the burden of responsibility. For geo-political

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security, and perhaps of equal importance, for symbolic reasons, the United States perceived Vietnam as the vital test of governmental systems.

The introductory quotations to this chapter succinctly describe the US penchant for coalition warfare. Several other major arguments for seeking "more flags" deserve mention. General W. Westmoreland in his book A Soldier Reports recalls "General MacArthur's recommendation to get other Oriental peoples involved in Vietnam." Concern over the American image in Asia was an important motivating force behind US efforts to bring in Korean, Thai and Filipino support. The US was most concerned lest its participation be labeled racist. A related concern or argument for 'additional flags' was the pressing military requirement for more troops in support of a weak South Vietnamese army. In a memo, dated 30 June 1965, "Holding on in South Vietnam," William Bundy noted the uncertain combat situation in SVN:

In short, whatever we think the chances are now of making the effort in the South really costly to Hanoi, the present deployment of major added US forces gives no real promise of helping the chances for this kind of success. . . . If the South Vietnamese government and army encounter a series of reverses in the next two months, the odds will rise that our own intervention would appear to be turning the conflict into a white man's war with the U.S. in the shoes of the French.<sup>4/</sup>

The passion of the US civilian leadership for coalition war was an important factor in directing American efforts to gain "more flags." The importance Americans attached to coalition war stemmed from World War I and later experiences, certainly to include the Korean War.<sup>5/</sup> Indeed, the memory of the Korean War, which was conducted with allied support under the flag of the United Nations, was present in the minds of US decision makers. American efforts to gain 'more flags' was always more an effort to create Vietnam in the image of the Korean War, thereby gaining greater respectability for participation in the war, than it was an attempt to share the financial and combat costs of the war. Participating in the Korean War were the forces of the US, Korea, Greece, Turkey, France, the British Commonwealth, Ethiopia, Colombia and Brazil joined under the flag of the

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United Nations. During the Vietnam War, however, neither the guise of a United Nations' action nor the clear command relationships of Korean days existed.

### B. US EFFORTS TO ENLIST SUPPORT

#### 1. Background

The United States policy toward Indochina during the Roosevelt Administration was neither one of supporting the French colonial concept nor one of supporting a trustee structure.<sup>6/</sup> The American position favoring independence for Indochina remained the same under Truman. At the end of World War II, however, it was determined that the Nationalist Chinese and the British would receive the surrender of the Japanese, with the Chinese operating north of the 16th parallel. As the French moved back into Vietnam, they did so without the support of the United States.<sup>7/</sup> The US maintained a neutral position and did not ally itself with either of the participants in the conflict--Ho Chi Minh and his Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV) or the Republic of France.

However, with the advent of the communist victory in China in 1949, United States' concerns regarding communism in the Far East were heightened and a search for new alliances and agreements was initiated. The Mutual Defense Assistance Act of 1949 reaffirmed "the policy of the United States to achieve international peace and security through the United Nations so that armed force shall not be used except in the common interest."<sup>8/</sup> Such increased concern over the spread of communism certainly contributed to the later decision on greater involvement of the United States and other allies in the security affairs of South Vietnam.

The Elysee Agreement signed in 1949 led to adoption of the "Bao Dai Solution" and to the eventual provision of US aid in 1950. A February 16, 1950 request by the French for assistance to South Vietnam initiated a chain of memorandums, survey missions, and strategic assessments which resulted in President Truman's approval of 10 million dollars in military assistance to South Vietnam in May of the same year.<sup>9/</sup> The aid grew to over one billion dollars in 1954 totaling almost 78% of the cost of

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the French war effort.<sup>10/</sup> The US assistance provided to the French was limited to financial aid; participation in the distribution, operational planning, observation, and training normally associated with military aid was precluded by the French. Some change in the Vietnam situation was sought as the Berlin Conference of 1954 added the French-Viet Minh problem to the agenda of the Geneva Convention. During the period of February 1954 to May 1954, the first attempt to carry out a unified military action by an alliance in support of the French was proposed by the US in response to the French call for aid to save Dien Bien Phu. The British, however, opposed any unified action, fearing that such a movement might jeopardize the negotiations in Geneva and further might trigger intervention by the Chinese.<sup>11/</sup> President Eisenhower decided not to intervene unilaterally for a variety of reasons, not the least of which were fear of provoking the Chinese and the improbability of gaining congressional approval for such an action. The Accords, which eventually were reached during the Geneva Conference of 1954, "temporarily" created two Vietnams - two nations which would engage in armed conflict and would thereby threaten world peace.<sup>12/</sup>

The collapse of the French military position in Indochina, the creation of two Vietnams neither of which was self-sufficient, and the conclusion of the Korean War lent support to the American-proposed Asian collective security agreement. The Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO) was established and served as the means through which the US allied itself with the government of South Vietnam in a collective security organization. Vietnam's relationship to the treaty was as a protocol state, the same status conferred upon Laos and Cambodia. The protection offered gratuitously to these states in a protocol to the treaty enabled them to get around the prohibition that they not join defense treaties.<sup>13/</sup>

The SEATO member states included a disparate group, many of whose members had little in common except opposition to or fear of communism:

- The United Kingdom,
- France,
- Australia,

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- New Zealand,
- Thailand,
- The Republic of the Philippines,
- Pakistan (then including East Pakistan which is now Bangladesh), and
- The United States.

US SEATO planners generally conceded that Pakistan's interest in SEATO lay in gaining allies against a hostile India rather than the potential threat posed by the Soviet Union. The Philippine government was more concerned with internal Huk dissidence than any external communist threat. Thailand had legitimate fears of the DRV and the PRC in addition to a growing problem of insurgency in the northeast provinces abutting Laos. The remaining members had joined SEATO mainly as a courtesy to the US, but also, perhaps, to solidify other relationships with the US, for example, the ANZUS Treaty.

During the height of the war in Vietnam, the French, Pakistanis, and Filipinos were only lightly represented at SEATO Headquarters in Bangkok and did not participate to any appreciable degree in contingency planning ventures. The Australians and New Zealanders, on the other hand, were competent and hard working and fully supported SEATO activities.<sup>14/</sup>

The diverse makeup of SEATO and lack of a commonly perceived threat made it virtually impossible for its members to take concerted military action. The flags of SEATO were not war banners. Conversely, the organization did contribute to non-military development in such fields as medicine, education, transportation, and communications.

### 2. US Appeal for "More Flags"

A major change in the US strategy in South Vietnam became apparent with the news conference of April 1964 when President Johnson appealed to the Free World to support South Vietnam through SEATO to reflect international concern in stopping the spread of communism.<sup>15/</sup> Negotiations were held with members of SEATO and with other allies concerning the nature of assistance required in Vietnam ranging from military aid and troops to medical teams and civil engineering. General Westmoreland writes on the

early reaction of the South Vietnamese concerning the deployment of foreign troops in SVN:

Serious discussion on obtaining troops from other countries began in December 1964, but the South Vietnamese at the time were apathetic if not opposed. They were sensitive, as their history would indicate, to having foreign troops on their soil yet when the need for more troops became pressing in March and April 1965, Ambassador Taylor readily secured South Vietnamese concurrence.<sup>16/</sup>

By mid 1965, the South Vietnamese army was weakened and morale was low. President Johnson, in his book The Vantage Point, writes that General Westmoreland saw "no alternative except to 'reinforce our efforts' in South Vietnam with additional US or Third Country forces 'as rapidly as is practical during the critical weeks ahead.'"<sup>17/</sup> Following intensive rounds of discussions, some flags began to appear. Many of our allies, however, declined active participation with the US as their separate domestic situations ruled against such involvement.<sup>18/</sup> It is also noteworthy that whereas the US had hoped to rally international support initially through SEATO, SEATO members proved to be less interested in assisting the GVN, while the Republic of Korea, which is not a signator of SEATO, supplied the bulk of the Third Nation forces.<sup>19/</sup>

Initial support in terms of combat units was supplied by Korea, Australia, and New Zealand. The Republic of China, the Philippines and Thailand also provided military aid in the form of noncombatants who served as advisors or civil action personnel. Although the Republic of China offered to send troops in support of US efforts, the Department of State strongly opposed this move on the grounds that it might precipitate an adverse Chinese communist response.<sup>20/</sup> In 1966, Thai involvement increased through the provision of combat troops. The nature of support provided by these countries ranged from military aid and support forces to psychological and guerrilla warfare support. The objectives and motivating factors for providing support to the war effort varied by country. Whereas Australia probably supported the effort out of concern for the security of

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the region as well as in support of her various international agreements, the Republic of Korea, while concerned over aggression in Asia, wished also to demonstrate her commitment to the US and to display the military skills learned from the US.<sup>21/</sup> This support continued throughout the period of heavy US involvement until early 1973 when the last allied combat troops were withdrawn.<sup>22/</sup>

In addition to the allied combat support, 39 countries provided "food, medical supplies, technical advisors, equipment, educational facilities, instructors, and [by 1968] over \$200 million in grants, loans, credits, or gifts to support the Vietnamese war effort."<sup>23/</sup> Participating countries included Free World nations in the Far East, Middle East, Africa, Europe, North America, and Latin American as can be seen in Figure 17-1.

### 3. SEATO's Failure to Produce Flags

The failure of most of the SEATO nations to respond to the US call for more flags, or combat forces, suggests that one of the following perceptions may have prevailed:

- The majority of the member nations did not consider the protocol state of RVN to be worth the risk, either politically or militarily, of committing combat forces in her behalf; or
- The SEATO Treaty itself was faulty and the organization was, therefore, ineffective; or
- The threat to the GVN was internal and not a concern of SEATO.

The major SEATO contingency plan, SEATO Plan 4, provided for the Commander Central Region, SEATO Field Forces, a US general officer (initially CGUSARPAC and later COMUSMACV) to have operational control of all combat forces made available to SEATO by member nations for the defense of the Indochina-Thailand area. Had that plan been implemented and had all or most member nations contributed combat forces, the US would have exercised command of all forces in the name of SEATO much like what was done in Korea under the UN. Had only SEATO Plan 7 been implemented, calling for the defense of RVN, the US again would have provided the commander, but the concept of operations for Plan 7 visualized hostilities being confined to the Republic.



SOURCE: LTG R. Laisen and BG J. L. C  
Vietnam, pp. 160-169

Figure 17-1. Third Country Non-H  
of Vietnam

COUNTRY	NON-MILITARY ASSISTANCE					
	CIVIL PROGRAMS	ENG CONSTRUCTION	FOOD AND AGRICULTURAL PROGRAMS	EDUC ASSIST	EMERG RELIEF	LOANS AND GRANTS & CREDITS
ALBANIA	MEDICAL 3 MEDICAL TEAMS VACCINES	CYCLE ENGINEERING SUPPORT HAND TOOLS FOR BROADCASTING STATION AND EQUIPMENT	FOOD STUFFS DAIRY & CROP EXPERTS	TEXTBOOKS RADIO TECH	1650,000 EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE (1988)	
ALGERIA	TECHNICAL TRAINING PROGRAMS	POWER SUBSTATION TECH & TOOLS FOR CONSTRUCTION OF POWER DAM & ELECTRICAL TRANSMISSION LINE	5,000 TONS RICE (61 MIL)	MAINT TEXT BOOKS		455 M. ECON ASSISTANCE
ANGOLA	MEDICAL TEAMS & SUPPLIES AMBULANCES MEDICAL EQUIPMENT			SCHOLARSHIPS	150,000 WORTH OF RELIEF SUPPLIES	
ARGENTINA	3 MEDICAL TEAMS				110,000 RELIEF & SUPPLIES	
AUSTRIA	MEDICAL SUPPLIES	POLICE TRAINING COUNTER INT. AGENCY TRAINING POLICE VEHICLES			VARIOUS RELIEF SUPPLIES	
AZERBAIDJAN	10 MEDICAL TEAM	CONTRIBUTION TOWARD A SCIENCE BUILDING		SCHOLARSHIPS FOR 80 VIET UNIVERSITY TEACHERS EQUIP	1988: 420,000 IN FOOD AND OTHER SUPPLIES	
BANGLADESH	STATION MEDICAL & 12 MAIN MEDICAL STAFF & SUPPLIES		FOODSTUFFS		FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE & CLOTHING	
BHUTAN	VACCINES	BUILDING MATERIALS	RICE FOR REFUGEES			
BURUNDI	MEDICAL TEAM	PETROLEUM PRODUCTS				
BURUNDI	PHARMACEUTICAL SUPPLIES	CEMENT	PROVIDED TRAINING IN IRRIGATION TECHNIQUES			
BURUNDI	VACCINES & OTHER MEDICINES					
BURUNDI	MEDICAL EQUIPMENT SUPPLIES AND MEDICAL EQUIPMENT					
BURUNDI	URGENT SUPPLIES FOR 100,000		10,000 CANS OF SARDINES	15, 20 SCHOLARSHIPS		
BURUNDI	AMBULANCE MEDICINES			15 SCHOLARSHIPS		
BURUNDI	MEDICAL TRAINING FOR 12 Nurses MEDICAL SUPPLIES					
BURUNDI	2 MEDICAL STAFF MEDICAL EQUIPMENT SUPPLIES	VOCATIONAL TEACHERS 3 SOCIAL CENTERS WITH TRAINED SOCIAL WORKERS WORK FOR JUVENILE DELINQUENTS		TRAINING FOR HIGH SCHOOL TEACHERS		148 MILLION IN CREDITS 1988: 15 M. IN ECON. AID
BURUNDI	URGENT SUPPLIES FOR 100,000			15 ACADEMIC FELLOWS		1,100,000 GRANT FOR



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The SEATO Treaty did not automatically trigger a response by member nations. Rather it considered an attack on one as an attack on all and required consultation and actions according to the constitutional processes of each member. The disappointing lack of military response by England, Pakistan, the Philippines and France (the latter had better reasons than most not to respond) showed the weakness of SEATO and its general inapplicability, even though the president of the United States cited the SEATO Treaty as obliging the US to take positive action in behalf of RVN. It was not SEATO that produced more flags, it was US friendship with Australia and New Zealand and US aid to other nations that brought the flags.

### C. OVERVIEW OF ALLIED COMBAT SUPPORT TO VIETNAM

#### 1. General

Allied support to Vietnam was representative of the Free World as a whole but was clearly provided by the United States' closest allies or by those nations that perceived a direct threat to their own national security. It must also be said that the enlistment of allied support was a direct result of efforts by the United States government to gain such aid, and was not linked to the efforts and desires of the Vietnamese government.<sup>24/</sup> Nevertheless, allied countries (also referred to as Third Nation or Third Country support) contributed to the Vietnam War a high, in 1969, of about 70,000 combat troops. Figure 17-2 provides a summary breakdown of those forces by nation. At no time during the war did Third Nation troops comprise over five percent of the total fighting force.

#### 2. Areas of Operation and Capabilities of Third Nation Forces

Early plans anticipated the use of the Third Nation combat forces as anti-infiltration forces to be located along the Demilitarized Zone. However, many problems associated with command relationships, logistical support and the size of the force necessary to stop the infiltration led to the employment of the Third Country combat forces on an individual basis.<sup>25/</sup>

Year Nation	END YEAR STRENGTH (IN THOUSANDS)									
	1965	1966	1967	1968	1969	1970	1971	1972		
Korea	20.7	45.6	47.8	49.9	50.2	48.6	45.7	35.4		
Australia	1.5	4.4	6.8	7.6	7.6	6.8	2.0	0		
Thailand	.02	.2	2.2	5.9	11.8	11.6	6.0	0		
New Zealand	.1	.2	.5	.6	.5	.6	.1	0		
Philippines*	.1	2.1	2.0	1.6	.2	.1	.1	.1		
Third Nations Total	22.42	52.5	59.3	65.6	70.3	67.7	53.9	35.5		
RVNAF & RF, PF	571	623	643	819	969	1047	1046	1090		
US Strength	184	385	486	536	475	335	158	24		
Grand Total	777.42	1060.5	1188.3	1420.6	1514.3	1449.7	1257.9	1149.5		

\*The Republic of the Philippines is listed due to security forces introduced to support the civil projects.

SOURCE: Data taken from Thomas Thayer, Journal of Defense Research, Series B: Tactical Warfare Analysis of Vietnam. Volume 76, No. 3 (Fall 1975), pp. 790, 794.

Figure 17-2. Summary of Combat Forces in Vietnam, 1965-1972

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The Third Nation combat forces were assigned to areas of operation (AOs) in conjunction with ARVN forces and US forces. Figure 17-3 indicates the primary AO's of Third Nation forces deployed in South Vietnam. Assignment of specific AO's was made in conjunction with the needs and requirements of the mission and with the special training, experience and capabilities of the separate national combat forces.

### a. Korean Forces

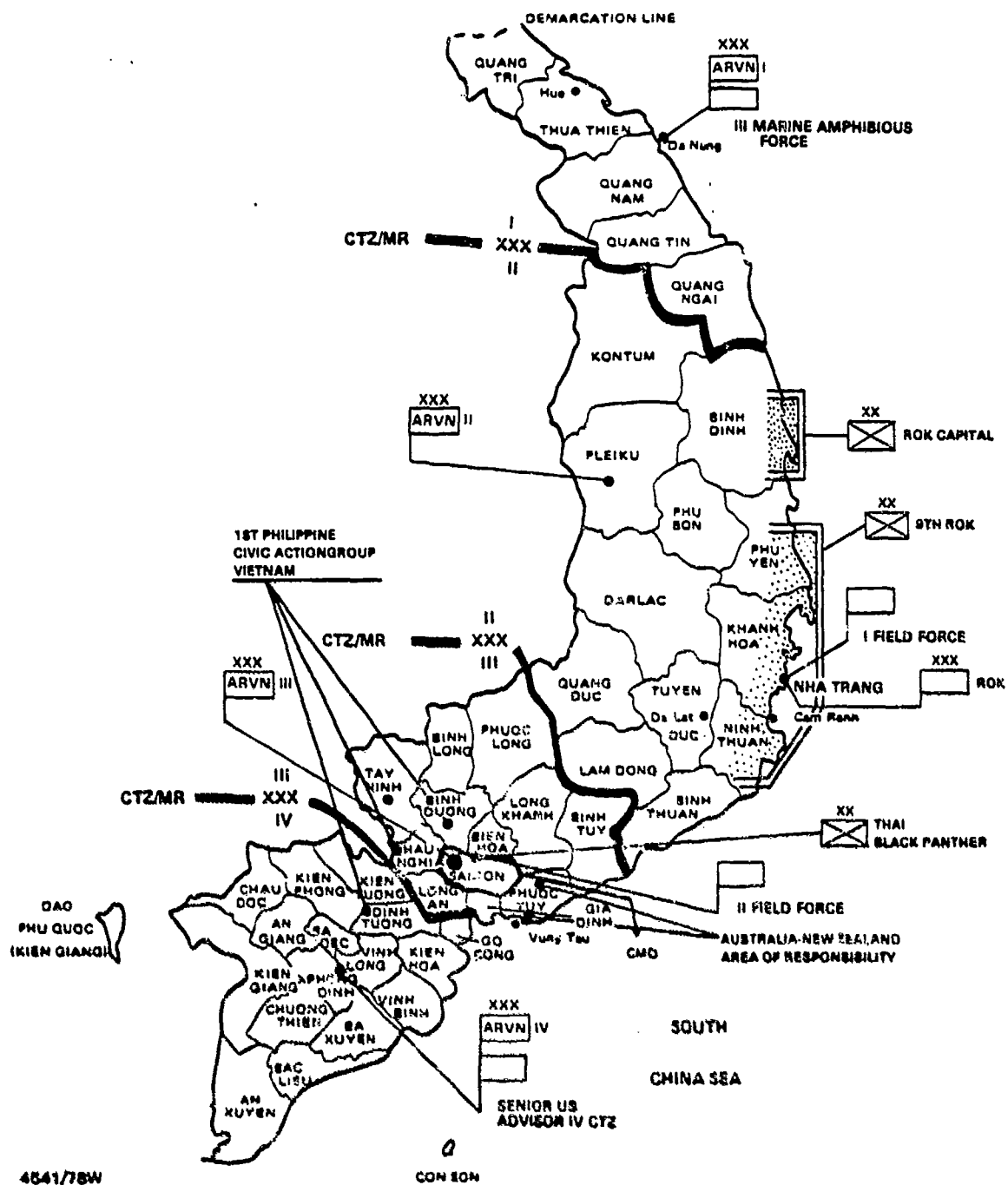
The areas of operation assigned to the Korean forces included the coastal regions of Binh Dinh, Phu Yen, Khanh Hoa and Ninh Thuan. The Korean forces were responsible for securing the ports of Qui Nhon, Cam Ranh Bay and Highway 19 to An Khe and from Phan Rang through Quan Nhon.<sup>26/</sup> It was envisioned that the Korean forces would secure the coastal areas, thus freeing US Marines for combat farther north. Korean combat operations were characterized by effective collection and analysis of intelligence, careful and thorough planning, and sound execution of tactics and techniques of operation at all levels.<sup>27/</sup> Nominal operational control of the Korean forces was exercised through the Free World Military Assistance Policy Council, whereas in reality COMUSMACV and/or CGIFF had to bargain with General Chae. There were too many problems associated with a combined command, not the least of which was South Korean sensitivities, so such a relationship was not set up. The ROKs were "anxious to have at least a facade of the same coequal status with the South Vietnamese that the Americans had," writes General Westmoreland in A Soldier Reports, <sup>28/</sup> adding,

The ROK marine brigade had command problems but fought well on defense. Because of a dictum from President Park, all ROK units were sensitive about keeping casualties down which resulted in a deliberate approach to operations, in involving lengthy preparations and heavy preliminary fire.<sup>29/</sup>

### b. Thai Forces

The Thai forces were assigned to a region in which enemy operations were on a low level.<sup>30/</sup> The Thai zone around Bien Hoa served as one of the major food regions for the Viet Cong, who engaged in fewer

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SOURCE: Indochina Refugee Authored Monographs and Larsen and Collins,  
Allied Participation in Vietnam

**Figure 17-3. Military Geographic Regions, 1966**

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offensive actions in this area. Further, Thai forces were located near major US units, which could support them. The operational control of the Thai Forces was under commanding General, II Field Forces, Vietnam. Although the Thai forces proved capable of planning and executing their own operations, the RTA was beset with basic problems.<sup>31/</sup> General Stilwell concluded that the Army could not undertake two major missions, defense of Vietnam and defense of Thailand, simultaneously.<sup>32/</sup> In retrospect, some military experts agree that a major tactical error was committed by sending the Thai division to South Vietnam; those forces would have served the efforts of the Free World in Southeast Asia better had the Thais remained in Thailand to strengthen their own nation's defenses.<sup>33/</sup>

### c. Australian and New Zealand Forces

Australia and New Zealand provided a small, self-contained force which performed under the operational control of the US forces in the Phuoc Tuy region. With no language barrier between this force and the US forces, the integration of forces provided an effective fighting unit. The Australian and New Zealand troops under the operational control of the II Field Force Commander provided the closest approximation during the Vietnam war to the highly effective Korean War style of fighting. The Korean War was a "war of the (shoulder) patches" as national groups fought under one flag, yet preserved and demonstrated pride in their separate countries by wearing the patch/insignia of their country. The Australian and New Zealand forces were characterized as well-trained in guerrilla operations, having had experience in guerrilla wars both in Borneo and in Malaya. These forces capitalized on their previous experience in conducting civic programs, and they instituted civilian programs in support of the hamlets in the area surrounding the command post in the District.<sup>34/</sup>

### d. The Philippines

The contribution of the Philippines was primarily in the areas of medical teams and civic programs. Filipino combat forces were present only to protect their base camp and elements of the team, and this security force numbered some 528 persons.<sup>35/</sup> Support to South Vietnam was primarily through the Philippine Civic Action group which served as an

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important element in the overall pacification efforts. Their activities centered around Tay Ninh, Binh Duong and Dinh Tuong. The Philippine CAG was located where it could be supported by major US units.

### D. ALLIED SUPPORT AND THE CONDUCT OF THE WAR

The allied combat effort in South Vietnam demonstrated some very basic problems in the conduct of coalition warfare in such an environment. While the Korean War experience produced one set of "lessons" in coalition fighting, our Vietnam experience included quite a different range of problems and lessons. In the Vietnam context, Free World assistance resulted from American requests and not from requests made by the South Vietnamese. Allied combat support in South Vietnam served to demonstrate broader concern over the war. It was the American view that gaining "more flags," especially Asian flags, would help defuse the allegations that the Vietnam War was the "Americans' War" and further that it was a racist war. By introducing Korean and Thai forces in support of South Vietnam, it was hoped that such accusations would be shown clearly to be false. Nevertheless, the Vietnam War became America's war - it even came to be known as Johnson's or Nixon's war, McNamara's or Westmoreland's war. Regardless of the fact that Koreans, Thais, Australians, New Zealanders and others participated in the fighting, the US bore the burden through provision of funds and equipment to the allies (with the exception of Australia and New Zealand).

Certainly, the support of seventy thousand (by 1969) Third Nation troops aided the war effort both by securing specific zones and by engaging in direct combat. There were also other ways whereby our allies were supportive, yet there were a number of problems associated with conducting an allied effort. Perhaps most importantly, unlike the experience during the Korean War, the US had no direct command authority over all the allied troops. Instead, with the exception of the Australians and Thais, we fought the war by committee and by mutual agreement with our fiercely proud and independent allies. In an effort to coordinate military plans and



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activities, the US proposed and established the Free World Military Assistance Council. The Council, however, proved to be more a facade of international coordination and was, on the whole, not particularly effective as it comprised only three members, General Westmoreland, ROK General Chae and the Chief of the South Vietnamese Joint General Staff, General Cao Van Vien. Command relationships among the allied forces were fraught with problems and indeed such problems limited the allied efforts during the war.<sup>36/</sup>

General Stilwell, in discussing the Thais, noted the following: whereas, the Thai combat forces made little positive contribution to the war effort, he characterized the support of the Royal Thai Government as of "incalculable magnitude." The Thai government made available to the US the use of all of the principal Thai air bases.

Another problem which served to reduce combat efficiency among the allied forces was the disparity between reaction times of the US and allied Asian forces. While the Korean and Thai forces had shown indeed that they could accomplish missions in a thorough manner (in fact the ROK forces were known to have captured more weapons per enemy soldier killed than any of the other forces), the Asian allied forces too often had to be prodded into action by American commanders. For example, after the 1968 Tet Offensive, General Westmoreland reports that he had great difficulty in getting the Korean forces to reopen Highway 19, the major east-west transport route in the region.<sup>37/</sup> Since the US did not have the command authority that it had over allied troops during the Korean War, such problems became real hardships, and on the average allied combat efficiency during the Vietnam war was not as great as it had been during the Korean War. In 1968, when General Westmoreland was serving as a member of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, he highlighted the severity of problems among the allied forces in Vietnam and suggested that stubbornness on the part of our allies be handled on a government-to-government basis. General Corcoran in recounting his experiences as commander of the 1st Field Force in MR II noted that there was no corps commander responsible for MR II. As a result, he said that there were

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always twice as many troops overall as were needed, yet for specific missions there was frequently a shortage of troops. The allied system of fighting as setup in South Vietnam resulted in a great waste of manpower and in an ineffective use of troops. The lack of a unified command structure meant that we "couldn't plan to use the forces in the most efficient way." Further it meant that there was no commonly shared intelligence. Intelligence marked 'US eyes only' could not be passed directly to our allies, and too often US officials had to use doubletalk to relay information without revealing sources, etc.38/

In many ways, the allied combat effort in support of the South was far from the unified effort that was required in combating a determined enemy. The Korean forces who comprised the bulk of Third Nation troops did not mix well with the South Vietnamese, who showed their fear of the Koreans. Early in the war, "the South Vietnamese Minister for Rural Construction, General Thang, complained [to American officials] that South Korean units operating in Binh Dinh province had lobbed 2,000 artillery shells into a hamlet as preparatory fire before an attack and had almost completely destroyed it."39/ Douglas Kinnard in his book The War Managers, recounts accusations of the brutality of the South Korean forces in Vietnam.

There was a flurry of stories concerning Korean brutality and atrocities in the newspapers in early 1970; they were revived again about two years later. There seems little doubt that Korean brutalities and killings occurred approximately as alleged in these articles. American observers recount discussions with South Vietnamese civilians and military who expressed anger and bitterness at the conduct of the Koreans. There are anecdotes by the dozen, but they are hearsay, since . . . foreigners were not allowed to wander around the Korean area of operations.40/

The USG wanted the support of the Koreans and other Asian forces to demonstrate that broad Asian security interests were at stake, but government officials ultimately were responsible for the problems associated with Third Nation participation.

Serious problems also arose concerning the misuse of PX privileges. The Korean forces appeared to have been the most serious offenders of PX

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regulations, but some Americans and South Vietnamese were also involved in corruption.

In addition there have been allegations, many confirmed, that Korean forces had appropriated large numbers of brass shell casings ranging from small arms to artillery ammunition.<sup>41/</sup> Participation in the war brought to both the Republic of Korea and Thailand tremendous economic gains. In most cases those gains were part of the US package deal to "buy flags." The US offered to modernize the ROK armed forces over an extended period of time, and agreed to provide ROK firms with substantial subcontract work. The Philippines and Thailand too were provided with increased US military aid and materiel as part of their agreement to offer support to RVN. The South Koreans, however, were characterized as "tough bargainers" when it came to bargaining for their continued support. When the South Koreans, following the Pueblo incident, became concerned over North Korean talk of a general war, "the South Koreans were speaking publicly of withdrawing their forces from Vietnam unless they received more United States aid to protect their homeland."<sup>42/</sup> The US was also persuaded by the ROK to keep the 2nd US Division in South Korea because of the fear of a North Korean invasion.

American and foreign civilian contractors also benefited from the war. The Japanese supplied the Sony television cameras and monitors used on US military aircraft. Other firms performed the massive construction projects associated with basing and transportation requirements. American Government estimates indicate that in 1969 alone, "the war in South Vietnam provided South Korea with 20 percent of its foreign exchange earnings. . . . Approximately 10 percent of the Philippines' foreign exchange income was derived from its participation in the Vietnam War."<sup>43/</sup>

The US Government assumed most of the financial burden for the conduct of the war, even to the extent of paying death gratuities to relatives of Third Nation forces who had been killed in the fighting.<sup>44/</sup> In a very real sense, the USG paid dearly for allied support from Vietnam's Asian neighbors.

It is difficult to assign a value to the combat assistance of our allies in terms of the conduct of the war. As in the Korean situation,

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less than five percent of the total fighting force at all times comprised Third Nation countries. The US assigned great importance, however, to involving more nations, but this seemed to be of symbolic value serving more as a public relations function for American and foreign audiences.

### E. SUMMARY ANALYSIS AND INSIGHTS

The call for Third Nation (Free World) military forces in support of South Vietnam came principally from the US and was supported reluctantly by the GVN. While Third Nation combat support never exceeded five percent of the total troops committed to the South at any time during the war, the US wanted badly the political and psychological support gained by allied participation in Vietnam. The military/combat assistance from Third Countries was minimal and was, in the cases of the Thai and Filipino forces, actually more of a liability. Figure 17-4 summarizes the major advantages and disadvantages associated with the US effort to gain more flags in Vietnam. In retrospect it appears that the disadvantages outweighed the advantages by far, for the primary advantages that were expected, those dealing with the improvement of the US image, were never realized.

Our experience with our Asian allies in South Vietnam highlighted another important issue - Asians do not necessarily get along better with other Asians than do whites. The US desire to gain more flags and specifically to gain Asian flags resulted in the introduction of nationalities which were not always compatible with the native South Vietnamese. Specifically, the South Vietnamese feared the South Korean soldiers and found them to be arrogant and cruel.

Finally, the way in which the USG opted to fight in Vietnam and the command arrangements that evolved were inefficient. There does not appear to be any evidence that the number of flags in RVN cloaked the US/Free World operations with any greater legitimacy than otherwise would have existed. The principal value of allied participation seems to have been the size of the ROK forces which enabled them to control a substantial

<p><u>ADVANTAGES</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduce US sense of isolation in war</li> <li>• Debunk myth of war as racist</li> <li>• Provide more troops for security and combat missions</li> <li>• Provide essential non-military support and assistance</li> </ul>	<p><u>DISADVANTAGES</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Problems of command and control</li> <li>• Tremendous financial costs borne by US</li> <li>• Cultural differences cause problems of understanding</li> <li>• Problems in terms of presenting unified political front</li> </ul>
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Figure 17-4. Pros and Cons of US Effort to Gain More Flags in South Vietnam

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amount of territory in II CTZ, thereby facilitating the economy of force operations characterized by the US 4th Infantry Division in the Central Highlands.

### F. LESSONS

A principal lesson gained from our experience with coalition war in Vietnam concerns the need for carefully examining the advantages and disadvantages of the participation of Third Nation forces in a limited war. It may very well be the case that the psychological and political support of allies are needed. In examining the pros and cons of allied support, however, it is essential that the separate allies' interests and objectives regarding participation in the effort be considered also. By knowing one's allies better, it may be possible to anticipate the extent of their contribution to the effort, and thence, to have a firmer basis on which to evaluate the pros and cons of an allied effort and the likely costs to the US.

A second lesson pertains to the size of allied forces to be employed. It may be more appropriate to deploy an ally's small elite forces than to use large cumbersome units. Attaching an ally's battalions or brigades to a US division as was done during the Korean War would be a more effective use of troops, assuming that such a relationship was feasible politically from the Allies' standpoint.

The separate or mutual goals of allies may change over time and thereby strengthen or weaken an alliance; it behooves a nation continually to assess its treaty commitments and obligations and to be prepared to extricate itself from those which lose their usefulness. Once entered into and while in force, treaties should be respected and their provisions adhered to.

In the desire to gain more flags in any contingency situation, US decision makers should carefully weigh the advantages in receiving moral and political support from some allies in place of support from (cumbersome, inept, or expensive) combat units.

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## CHAPTER 17 ENDNOTES

1. Chester L. Cooper, The Lost Crusade (Greenwich, Conn.: Fawcett Publications, Inc., 1972), p. 323.
2. BDM interview with General Richard Giles Stilwell, US Army (Ret) September 24, 1979.
3. General William C. Westmoreland, A Soldier Reports (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1976), p. 250.
4. Senator Mike Gravel, ed., "Memo on Holding on in South Vietnam," The Pentagon Papers (Boston: Beacon Press, 1971), Vol. IV, p. 612.
5. BDM interview with Dr. Vincent Davis, Professor and Director of the Patterson School of Diplomacy and International Commerce, The University of Kentucky, June 13, 1979, at The BDM Corporation.
6. Senator Mike Gravel, ed., "Background to the Conflict, 1940-1950, Roosevelt Trustee Concept," The Pentagon Papers, Vol. I, pp. 9-15.
7. Ibid., "Truman and the Occupation of Indochina, 1945," pp. 15-19.
8. Ibid., "Findings and Declaration of Policy," Vol. I, p. 36.
9. Ibid., "Report by the National Security Council on Position of the United States with Respect to Indochina, February 27, 1950," Vol. I, P. 361; "US Aid to Indochina," Vol. I, p. 66; "Memorandum for the Secretary of Defense," Vol. I, p. 363.
10. Ibid., on the Military Assistance Program, Vol. I. pp. 77-78; see also Bernard Fall, Street Without Joy (Harrisburg, Pa.: The Stackpole Co., 1961), p. 281, for a discussion of French expenditures for war.
11. Ibid., "United Action" as an alternative to either negotiations or unilateral US intervention, Vol. I, pp. 101-103.
12. Joseph Buttinger, Vietnam: A Dragon Embattled (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1967), Vol. II, pp. 842-844.
13. BDM interview with Amb. U. Alexis Johnson, September 13, 1978, who described to the BDM study team the efforts of Secretary of State John Foster Dulles in developing the collective security apparatus.
14. Information on SEATO provided by a former Chief of the US/SEATO Plans Division, MAC J-52 (1968-1969) in a discussion at The BDM Corporation. Interview with Colonel J. A. MacDonald, USMC (Ret), 11 December 1979.

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15. The background of US efforts to enlist allied support is found in LTG S. R. Larsen and BG J. L. Collins, Jr., Allied Participation in Vietnam, Vietnam Studies Series (Washington, D.C.: Department of Army, 1975), pp. 1-24.
16. General William C. Westmoreland, p. 133.
17. Lyndon B. Johnson, The Vantage Point (New York: Popular Library, 1971), p. 143.
18. The dialogue between Ambassador Francis Galbraith and Sir Robert Thompson contained in the book The Lessons of Vietnam, ed. by W. Scott Thompson & Donaldson D. Frizzell (New York: Crane and Russak, 1977) conveys an understanding of the importance to the conduct of the war of European Allied perceptions of the Vietnam War.

Ambassador Francis Galbraith:

I have been very impressed by the fact that we had the will of Southeast Asians with us: I specifically mean the people in the vicinity of Vietnam, who wanted us to prevail and wanted us to stay. In contrast, our allies in Europe, particularly, varied from disapproval to indifference, and I have always thought that this had a fairly important effect on the public opinion of this country. I wonder if we could have convinced the Europeans that their own attitudes did have these effects on our public opinion. In other words, could, conceivably, the notion have been conveyed in some way that this was in the national interest of the various allies and in that way strengthened our own conception?

Sir Robert Thompson:

Here I think you ran into a problem. France is a subject by itself, because the French were in a very ambivalent situation. I would say that one of the errors that President Johnson made was in choosing Paris for the peace talks. Warsaw would have been much better.

If you take my own country, you were fully supported by the Macmillan and the Douglas-Home Government. In 1970, when you went into Cambodia, Michael Foote, who became a Minister of Employment, on a motion to adjourn the House -- a necessary formality -- condemned the American invasion of Cambodia. This was at the end of the Labour Government's administration of 1964-70. The foreign Secretaries, Michael Stewart, George Brown, and so on, were, at all times, right behind you. Mr. Wilson, rather like the French, was ambivalent on Vietnam, as he was on any other subject. Now, this vote of censure got some mileage in the U.S. press. Do you know what they raised out of 600 members of the House of Commons for censuring the United States? Sixty-five. One tenth voted for it. The Conservatives abstained



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because this was an internal Labour row. The Labour Party voted, I think, somewhere like 260 or 270 to 65 against that censure motion. So your stand there was supported in the United Kingdom. Of course, it has been influenced now by what you have done and what the situation is.

19. In a letter to The BDM Corporation, dated September 18, 1979, Retired Marine Colonel Victor Croizat who served as the US Military Advisor's Representative (MILADREP) to 1962-1964 SEATO discussed the development of a SEATO plan to aid a protocol state, The Republic of Vietnam, in its efforts to counter subversion. Croizat writes: "Generals Tran Van Don and Dung Van Minh came to Bangkok to offer me the services of the Vietnamese Army in the preparation of this plan. I was instructed to refer them to General Harkins (General Westmoreland's predecessor) in Saigon . . . and there the matter rested." Croizat recalls that the "SEATO plan, [which was] approved by the eight member countries, called for the US to provide the SEATO Force Commander and the nucleus of his staff." It thus would have been possible, writes Croizat "for us to run the war in Vietnam under SEATO and thereby lessen the opprobrium we eventually had to face." This point is, it would seem, highly debatable for neither the French nor the British were willing/able to commit forces to the region. If there is any truth to the quote below, then neither would the Philippines have been willing to help had the US not offered payments (whether in the form of financial compensation or of modernization of their armed forces equipment).

The [Symington subcommittee] hearings showed, for example, that the United States has been paying for the Philippine troop commitment in Vietnam. It has also shown that, without this payment, the Philippines would not have sent a single man to help the United States in Vietnam. . . . Administration officials admitted paying the Philippines some \$40 million to send the troops to Vietnam. . . . The US paid South Korea and Thailand as well. William Selover, Christian Science Monitor, November 28, 1969.

20. General William C. Westmoreland, pp. 259-260.

21. A discussion of the objectives and strategies of our principal allies in combat in South Vietnam is found in this study series, Volume V, Planning the War, Chapter 2. The major motivating forces for allied support of combatants are reviewed in the chart below.

ALLIED PARTICIPANT	NATURE OF SUPPORT	MAJOR OBJECTIVES/MOTIVATING FACTORS FOR PROVIDING SUPPORT TO U.S. — GVN WAR EFFORT
AUSTRALIA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● ADVISORY (GUERRILLA WARFARE)</li> <li>● ECONOMIC TECHNICAL</li> <li>● MILITARY AID AND COMBAT TROOPS</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● CONCERN OVER AGGRESSION IN ASIA</li> <li>● COMMITMENTS MADE IN COLOMBO PLAN, SEATO, AND OTHER BI-LATERAL AGREEMENTS</li> </ul>
NEW ZEALAND	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● ADVISORY</li> <li>● ECONOMIC TECHNICAL</li> <li>● MILITARY AID AND COMBAT TROOPS</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● CONCERN OVER AGGRESSION IN ASIA</li> <li>● COMMITMENTS MADE IN COLOMBO PLAN AND SEATO</li> <li>● MILITARY INTEREST IN INCREASED EXPERIENCE IN COMBAT OPERATIONS, ESPECIALLY IN JUNGLE THEATER AND IN INCREASED KNOWLEDGE OF VIETNAM</li> </ul>
PHILIPPINES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● ECONOMIC TECHNICAL</li> <li>● ADVISORY</li> <li>● MILITARY AID AND SUPPORT FORCES</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● CONCERN OVER AGGRESSION IN ASIA</li> <li>● DESIRE FOR INCREASE IN US MILITARY AID: STRENGTHEN OWN MILITARY ESTABLISHMENT</li> <li>● COMMITMENT TO SEATO</li> </ul>
REPUBLIC OF CHINA (ROC) (TAIWAN)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● ECONOMIC TECHNICAL</li> <li>● PSYCHOLOGICAL WARFARE</li> <li>● ADVISORY</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● CONCERN OVER AGGRESSION IN ASIA, PARTICULARLY COMMUNIST CHINESE</li> <li>● DESIRE TO ASSIST US</li> </ul>
REPUBLIC OF KOREA (ROK) (SOUTH KOREA)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● MILITARY AID AND COMBAT TROOPS</li> <li>● ADVISORY</li> <li>● ECONOMIC TECHNICAL</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● CONCERN OVER AGGRESSION IN ASIA</li> <li>● COMMITMENT TO US</li> <li>● DESIRE TO DISPLAY ITS MILITARY SKILLS LEARNED FROM US.</li> <li>● DESIRE FOR ADDITIONAL US OUTLAYS OF MILITARY MATERIEL</li> </ul>
THAILAND	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● ADVISORY</li> <li>● ECONOMIC TECHNICAL</li> <li>● MILITARY AID AND SUPPORT FORCES</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● DESIRE TO ASSUME MORE RESPONSIBLE ROLE IN ACTIVE DEFENSE OF SOUTHEAST ASIA AND CONCERN OVER AGGRESSION IN SEA</li> <li>● DESIRE TO MODERNIZE THAI MILITARY FORCES</li> <li>● DESIRE FOR POLITICAL GAINS: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>— DOMESTIC: THROUGH MORE VISIBLE AIR DEFENSE SYSTEM</li> <li>— INTERNATIONAL: THROUGH PARTICIPATION BOTH IN THE AREA AND AT THE PEACE TABLE</li> </ul> </li> <li>● COMMITMENT TO SEATO</li> </ul>

22. Redeployment of US and allied forces, the Nixon Doctrine and the Vietnamization Program are examined in MG Nguyen Duy Hinh, ARVN, Vietnamization and the Cease Fire, Indochina Refugee Authored Monograph Program. Prepared for Department of Army, Office of Chief of Military History (McLean, VA: General Research Corporation, 1976).
23. CINCPAC and COMUSMACV, Report on the War in Vietnam (as of 30 June 1968) (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1968), p. 221.
24. A review of negotiations toward obtaining support for Vietnam is contained in Vol. I of the Gravel edition of the Pentagon Papers and in the very brief summary contained in the Vietnam Studies series, Allied Participation in Vietnam. These reviews show how the US Government pushed for allied support while the internal politics of Vietnam and the conflicting priorities of issues perceived by the US and by South Vietnam did not necessarily support the courting of allied support.

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25. General Westmoreland, p. 133.
26. Larsen and Collins, pp. 129-131.
27. CINCPAC and COMUSMACV, Report on the War in Vietnam (as of June 1968); and Larsen and Collins, pp. 142, 151, 154-157. See also General Westmoreland, A Soldier Reports, pp. 256-258 for details on how ROK forces performed or on how they interacted with the US.
28. General Westmoreland, pp. 133-134. BDM interview with General Charles Corcoran, 22 January 1980, at The BDM Corporation presents a somewhat different view of the issue. General Corcoran believes that the US made a major mistake by not establishing a more unified command structure in South Vietnam. His response to the argument that ROK pride and independence precluded the establishment of a combined/unified command is to point to the successful functioning of the combined corps in the ROK today.
29. Ibid., p. 257.
30. Larsen and Collins, pp. 45-48.
31. BDM interview with General Richard Giles Stilwell, September 24, 1979, whose key assignments as J3 and C/S of MACV, April 1963 - July 1965, and as COMUSMACTHAI and CHJUSMAAG-T from the summer of 1965 to the summer of 1967 afforded him considerable experience in working with Thai forces. Among the weaknesses of the RTA were the following: forces were overstructured and undermanned; the army faced growing insurgency; and the logistics system in support of operations was poor. Further discussion of the Royal Thai Armed Forces is contained in a letter to Marshal Thanom Kittikachorn, Minister of Defense, Royal Thai Government from LTG Julian J. Ewell who, as CG 9th Division and CG II FFV, had two years of service in South Vietnam during which time he worked very closely with the RTA. A careful reading of the letter, dated April 3, 1970, identifies areas of weakness in the Thai Armed Forces, yet it does so in a highly diplomatic style. Among the issues which General Ewell discusses are requirements for the following: "for very strong leadership from top to bottom;" "for strong emphasis placed on active offensive small unit operations," for "a warm and cooperative attitude" among the forces especially in dealing with allies; for commanders to have a very broad view of operations; and for commanders to be "tough, aggressive, flexible, imaginative, and above all willing to work very hard." See also General Westmoreland, A Soldier Reports, p. 259.
32. Interview with General Stilwell.
33. Ibid. Also Ewell letter to Marshal Thanom Kittikachorn.

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34. For a discussion of the Australian and New Zealand forces, see Larsen and Collins, pp. 88-114; see also Westmoreland's A Soldier Reports, pp. 258-259. It should be noted that as early as 1962 some 30 Australian jungle warfare specialists were sent to RVN as training advisors.
35. Ibid., p. 63.
36. For an in-depth examination of command relationships among the allies together with the problems associated with command and control, see Chapter 11, Volume VI, of this study.
37. BDM interview with General W. C. Westmoreland, August 29, 1979.
38. Interview with General Corcoran.
39. Guenter Lewy, America in Vietnam (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), p. 97.
40. Douglas Kinnard, The War Managers (Hanover, N.H.: University Press of New England, 1977), p. 54. See also Guenter Lewy for a recount of an atrocity "similar to the My Lai massacre" committed by Korean troops, p. 327.
41. General Westmoreland, p. 258.
42. Don Oberdorfer, Tet! (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday & Company, Inc. 1971), p. 260.
43. Chester Cooper, p. 323.
44. The "buying of more flags" through compensation for allied combat forces, equipment of these forces along with loans, grants and technical assistance has been criticized heavily. The GAO report "US Agreements with and Assistance to Free World Forces in Southeast Asia" called for improved reporting of payments to foreign governments and armed forces by the Departments of Defense and State.

Further, General Westmoreland, in a BDM interview, commented that General Abrams had told him during the war that the "Koreans drive a hard bargain" when it came to trying to gain their support in RVN.

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